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Input from the Economic Commission for Europe to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits the input from the Economic Commission for Europe to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

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Input from the Economic Commission for Europe to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

I. Attendance

1. The first session of the regional forum was held on 25 April 2017 and was chaired by Laurence Monnoyer-Smith, Commissioner General for Sustainable Development and Interministerial Delegate for Sustainable Development for the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Seas of France.

2. The session was attended by representatives of the following 46 member States of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE): Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uzbekistan.

3. The European Union was represented by the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, the European Environment Agency and Eurostat.

4. Representatives of the following United Nations departments, funds and programmes, specialized agencies and related organizations attended the meeting: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Group, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Headquarters in New York, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization (WHO).

5. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and regional organizations also took part in the session: the Asia-Europe Foundation, the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, the Council of Europe, the Eurasian Economic Commission, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Scaling Up Nutrition.

6. Representatives of 97 non-governmental organizations as well as of other organizations also participated. A complete list of participants can be found on the website of the regional forum (www.unece.org/rfsd2017.html).

II. Opening and adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/AC.25/2017/1

7. The regional forum adopted the provisional agenda (ECE/AC.25/2017/1).

8. The Executive Secretary of ECE welcomed all participants and acknowledged progress in many countries towards sustainable development, including national strategies, stakeholder involvement and the fact that some countries now measured new legislation based on their impact on the Sustainable Development Goals. He stressed how the Goals were pushing all members of the United Nations family and other international organizations to work together in new and effective ways. At the opening session, a group of young students associated with the Eduki Foundation, a Geneva-based organization that promotes the education and awareness of youth of the work of international organizations, offered their views on the need for a strong and broad commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and indicated that the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals should involve youth, including through practical projects carried out by young people. In her opening remarks, the Chair emphasized the diversity of the ECE region and underlined the importance of mobilizing all sectors for success.

9. Several representatives of the United Nations system addressed the forum at the opening session. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations emphasized that the United Nations system needed to engage with countries at different levels and that regional commissions were instrumental in mobilizing political leadership and facilitating partnerships, and, through them, could lead to regional and global public goods. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs drew attention to the importance of the regional dimension and the need to improve coherence, strengthen collaboration and facilitate communication as part of the overall efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Assistant Secretary-General of UNDP, who also serves as the Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States and as Chair of the regional United Nations Development Group team for Europe and Central Asia, outlined the multiple risks that the region is facing and stressed the role of the 2030 Agenda in addressing those challenges. She emphasized the need to focus efforts on the most vulnerable and identify accelerators to drive forward the implementation of the Goals, and that gender equality was a key accelerator of progress across the 2030 Agenda and the multiple Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

III. Policy segment: the second year of the Sustainable Development Goals in the region — knowing where we stand and moving on to prosperity and well-being for all (agenda item 2)

Documentation: ECE/AC.25/2017/INF2

10. The policy segment, which was moderated by the Executive Secretary of ECE, provided a platform for a cross-sectoral exchange and discussion on progress thus far and pending challenges for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the ECE region, with a particular focus on prosperity, health and well-being and gender, within the broader theme of the high-level political forum of 2017.

11. The policy segment was introduced by a keynote speech by the President of the International Institute for Sustainable Development and followed by a panel

discussion that included the Minister for Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration of Albania; the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs for Non-European Countries, Economic and Development Cooperation of Czechia; the Commissioner General for Sustainable Development and Interministerial Delegate for Sustainable Development for the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Seas of France; the Deputy Secretary-General of OECD; the Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe; the Secretary-General of the International Chamber of Commerce; and the President of the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan. The President of the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan conveyed to the forum the outcome of a preparatory civil society consultation that took place in Geneva on 24 April 2017. Interventions from the floor, including from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Hungary, Slovenia and Tajikistan, also contributed to the discussions at the policy segment.

12. The Chair's summary, included in annex I, presents the main issues raised. Written statements are available on the website of the regional forum.

IV. Peer learning segment (agenda item 3)

Documentation: ECE/AC.25/2017/INF3, ECE/AC.25/2017/INF4 and ECE/AC.25/2017/INF5

13. The peer learning segment was structured as three parallel regional round tables, covering three different topics, to facilitate more in-depth practical exchanges of experiences and best practices.

A. Regional round table I: national and local adaptation of the Sustainable Development Goals

14. Round table I focused on the ongoing process of adapting the global Sustainable Development Goals to national and local circumstances. Reviewing and adjusting national strategies, plans and instruments is a major first step to be taken by governments in the region to start implementing the Goals.

15. Round table I was moderated by the President of the AtKisson Group. Switzerland served as the rapporteur.

B. Regional round table II: subregional cooperation for Sustainable Development Goal implementation

16. The subregional level is important to the creation of a multilayered system of Sustainable Development Goal implementation and follow-up. Neighbouring countries working together can help address issues of common concern, including those of a transboundary nature. The round table shared experiences and discussed how cooperation within the various ECE subregions could help advance the Goals.

17. Round table II was moderated by the Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe. Portugal served as the rapporteur.

C. Regional round table III: data and monitoring

18. Improving the data situation and building statistical capacities for the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals remains a significant challenge for all countries in the region and beyond. The round table provided an opportunity

for dialogue between policymakers and statisticians on the needs, feasibility and limitations of Sustainable Development Goal data.

19. Round table III was moderated by France. The United States of America served as the rapporteur.

20. The Chair's summary (see annex I) presents main issues raised in the discussions at each round table. Written statements are available on the website of the regional forum.

V. Reporting back and closing (agenda item 4)

21. The rapporteurs reported back to the plenary of the regional forum the main messages resulting from the discussions at each round table (see annex I).

22. The regional forum heard a closing address by students facilitated by the Eduki Foundation. In her closing remarks, a civil society representative emphasized that the space for civil society was shrinking and stressed the importance of meaningful participation of civil society organizations in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the need to provide an institutional mechanism for that participation. The Executive Secretary of ECE remarked on how ideas are now becoming actions that advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He emphasized the ways in which a multi-stakeholder approach had been critical for the development of the Goals and now was even more important to their implementation. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva acknowledged the convening power of ECE and its historical role in bridging divides. He introduced the work of the Sustainable Development Goals labs in bringing together various Geneva-based actors and tapping into different sources of knowledge, as well as in taking forward the discussions at the regional forum.

23. Before closing the meeting, the Chair informed participants that the Chair's summary would be circulated for comments by participants. The final version would constitute the official input from the ECE region to the high-level political forum of 2017.

Annex

Chair's summary of the policy segment and the peer learning segment

Policy segment: the second year of the Sustainable Development Goals in the region — knowing where we stand and moving on to prosperity and well-being for all

1. The policy segment provided an opportunity to take stock of the current situation and exchange views on major factors influencing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Within the overall context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the broader theme of the high-level political forum of 2017, discussions had a particular focus on the key themes of prosperity, health and well-being and gender.

2. Sustainable Development Goals are universal, so they concern all member States without distinction. An Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) pilot study showed that in many countries significant progress was required to meet the goals by 2030. Civil society organizations drew attention to the fact that, even in advanced economies, multidimensional inequality, precarious forms of labour market participation and homelessness remain pressing concerns.

3. Despite progress, there are multiple fragilities in the region, including the looming challenges posed by climate change and large migration movements, in a context in which economic expansion remains moderate. Some participants pointed out that inequality is a serious threat to growth and social cohesion. In order to rally all parties to Sustainable Development Goal implementation efforts, it is necessary to demonstrably show the benefits that advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development brings for all and to emphasize that the Goals are a positive framework for change that can effectively address environmental and inequality concerns. Effective delivery is critical at the current stage so that there can be visible results from policy action. Moreover, some participants stressed that, given the scale of the challenges ahead, the available time is limited.

4. The ambition of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, including the different trade-offs and synergies involved, and the need to ensure balance between the three pillars of sustainable development, has led to new mechanisms of coordination. Different institutional solutions to steer Sustainable Development Goal implementation and facilitate coordination have been deployed throughout the region. In Czechia, for example, the Prime Minister is in charge of preparing the new strategic framework for sustainable development. Innovative mechanisms for the involvement of parliament have also been put in place. In Hungary, a parliamentary ombudsman for future generations provides inputs on initiatives that can affect the quality of life of future generations.

5. While new bodies and mechanisms for Sustainable Development Goal implementation have been or are being created, efforts to mainstream the Goals within existing policy frameworks are critical in order to ensure effective implementation and cope with resource limitations.

6. In some countries, experiences with the Millennium Development Goals provide a starting point. In Tajikistan, long-term development strategies incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals have been developed on the basis of the lessons learned during the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. In Armenia, gaps in Millennium Development Goal implementation have been

identified to inform Sustainable Development Goal strategies, which are based on a systematic screening of legislation in order to define a road map.

7. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals requires the adaptation of both domestic and foreign policy strategies. Some countries have already revised or developed new development cooperation initiatives that are aligned with the Goals. Policy coherence between domestic and international actions has been recognized as an important element of sustainable development strategic frameworks. The efforts of small countries also matter, as shown by the efforts of Slovenia to strengthen its international development cooperation.

8. Some participants stressed that the Sustainable Development Goals open a new role for international cooperation, creating new opportunities to work together. In some areas, cross-border cooperation is particularly important, including, for example, the public health dimension of the ongoing refugee and migrant crises, or the many implications of climate change, including on health.

9. The United Nations system has provided direct assistance to programme countries in the region, including through rapid integrated assessments and guidance on mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support. Various participants emphasized the importance of that support by the regional United Nations system. For example, Georgia counts on help from the United Nations to develop a monitoring and evaluation system for Sustainable Development Goals, which is still missing in that country. Some participants stressed the positive role that a strengthened United Nations at the regional level will continue to play in assisting member countries in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

10. Given the complexity of the Sustainable Development Goals and the numerous policy areas involved, many actors need to be engaged in implementation. Breaking down silos and bringing together stakeholders that may have opposing interests shows the central challenge to implementing the Goals: dealing with complexities and identifying interrelations to find durable solutions with the agreement of partners. Effective policy action requires attracting new allies and actors, for example, engaging municipalities and mayors in health-related interventions. However, it was emphasized that the ultimate responsibility for the Goals lies with governments and that concrete policies reflect different national choices.

11. New ways to cooperate are emerging, based on reciprocity and shared benefits. Technological possibilities are opening different channels to exchange knowledge, tapping into new constituencies and reaching out to different demographic groups. Some participants mentioned that the concentration of development partners in Geneva working on multiple aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals provides a favourable ecosystem that facilitates collaboration and information exchange.

12. There was a strong recognition of the role of civil society in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. While the engagement of civil society is taking place mainly through organized groups, individual citizens, through their own initiatives and personal commitments, also have a role to play. To facilitate dialogue and encourage involvement, communication remains a critical factor. In Azerbaijan, the importance of awareness campaigns, including in schools, has been stressed. Strengthening ownership by society at large will promote increased public participation. Civil society organizations called for effective and meaningful engagement of civil society in all its diversity in the regional and national Sustainable Development Goal processes and are seeking the creation of a regional engagement mechanism.

13. In France, the mobilization of civil society has been a defining feature of its plans for Sustainable Development Goal implementation, which include a highly

structured programme of identification and engagement of partners across different goals, sometimes building on existing processes and carrying on the impetus stemming from the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Agreement on Climate Change. In that context, the strong synergies between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the contribution of the multi-stakeholder coalitions under the Global Climate Action Agenda for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, were highlighted.

14. Some participants emphasized that all stakeholders should be involved, including those that are profit-oriented, and that it was important to reach a common understanding of the needs and possibilities of both the public and the private sectors in Sustainable Development Goal implementation, which will require the use of a language that the business sector understands. Business opportunities have emerged in connection with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the private sector is increasingly aware that addressing sustainability is necessary and can be profitable. At the institutional level, business associations such as the International Chamber of Commerce are committed to working with the United Nations to advance the Goals. However, a meaningful contribution to sustainable development requires businesses to respect social, labour and environmental standards.

15. Putting in place the necessary infrastructure will require tapping into appropriate sources of financing. The rapid growth of green finance, including green bonds, was singled out as an auspicious trend. It was remarked that incentive structures in financial markets need to be changed, so they appropriately reflect sustainability issues. Blended finance, where public resources are used to de-risk investments, can be deployed to involve the private sector in pursuing public goals, including those related to infrastructure. It is clear that official development assistance (ODA) is insufficient to meet development goals and that the private sector needs to be involved, therefore new partnerships are required. However, civil society organizations called for ODA commitments to be upheld while including civil society organizations in public-private partnerships and other mechanisms that blend private and public finance. Clear accountability frameworks covering all development actors should be in place.

16. Health and well-being are outcomes, determinants and enablers for Sustainable Development Goals. Without health, many Sustainable Development Goals may not be achieved; at the same time, health itself benefits from progress towards other Goals. Health 2020, the European health policy framework, is fully aligned with the Goals and instrumental to their achievement. Bright spots in the region include higher life expectancy, reduced maternal mortality and a downward trend in non-communicable diseases. However, an overall positive picture masks significant differences within and between countries and population groups. Particular groups of women remain at higher risk of adverse outcomes during pregnancy and birth. Although most countries in the region provide at least near-universal health coverage, there are great differences in health services delivery and financing. It was remarked that a rights-based approach is important to effectively tackle those health challenges.

17. There are also many areas where significant improvements are required. For example, if progress on deaths from road injuries continues at the current rate, the region will fall short of the global target of a 50 per cent reduction in fatalities related to road traffic by 2020. Some lifestyle choices damage health and well-being. Environmental determinants account for 16 per cent of deaths in the World Health Organization (WHO) Europe region. Environmental factors and health inequities, which could be avoided by policy interventions, involve large costs.

Multisectoral actions are required to tackle the different factors that influence health outcomes. Addressing the causes of preventable deaths requires a particular focus on influencing the behaviour of young generations, without forgetting the health challenges posed by ageing societies.

18. As a stand-alone goal, Sustainable Development Goal 5 covers many important dimensions required to tackle the gender inequalities that remain persistent across the region. Gender equality also serves as a means to achieve all other goals, which cannot be met without an end to gender discrimination. Progress on achieving gender equality will facilitate reaching Goal 3 targets on health and well-being, particularly in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights. At the country level, for example, reforms in the agricultural sector in Albania ensure that public support for the sector includes provisions to encourage women's businesses and promote their engagement in economic activities. France has produced a map of the relations between Goal 5 and other goals, creating a tool that is projected to be used for other goals as well. In Georgia, developing an appropriate legal framework and being sensitive to gender issues has been an early concern. Tajikistan also recognizes gender as a cross-cutting issue in its development plans.

19. However, it was also mentioned that much remains to be done and that some trends are not encouraging. The amount of gender-related ODA is declining; civil society organizations emphasized that funding for women's rights organizations has been reduced and that formal provision of high-quality childcare and long-term care for the elderly is virtually non-existent in many countries in the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). Increased public investment is required to advance Sustainable Development Goal 5 and reap the positive influence of gender equality on other Sustainable Development Goals.

20. Many participants emphasized the close linkages that exist between different Sustainable Development Goals. The integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development opens new and more complex spaces for policy intervention. Navigating those spaces requires a good understanding of the relations between different goals but also an ability to work together across sectoral and organizational boundaries.

Regional round table I: national and local adaptation of the Sustainable Development Goals

21. Multiple initiatives are being carried out across the ECE region to advance the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Countries appear determined to make an early start by reviewing existing mechanisms and strategies while introducing different legal, institutional and policy changes. Although resources remain constrained, the overall picture for the region is that progress is taking place. However, significant efforts will be required in all countries, even the most developed.

22. Countries have revised existing strategies and sectoral plans or introduced new ones in the light of the Sustainable Development Goals. Existing policies are being inventoried and their contribution to the Goals assessed, including through the mapping of goals and targets, stocktaking and gap analysis. Work may proceed at varying speeds in different policy areas and, in some countries, different ministries may have reached various degrees of readiness. Actions undertaken concern both the external and the domestic dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Some countries are putting the Goals at the core of their development policies and humanitarian actions.

23. National implementation plans do not take place in a vacuum, so there is a need to understand how new Sustainable Development Goal priorities relate to previous policy initiatives. In the countries of the European Union, there are ongoing efforts to establish linkages between the agenda of the European Union and the Goals. The new or revised strategies often consider the institutional and social contexts of Goal implementation. Consultative processes have also been used in many countries to make those assessments.

24. Some participants reflected that the process of adaptation should also pay attention to the need for simplification to avoid the proliferation of too many policy documents. In some cases, targets are nationalized and introduced into existing reporting systems, with the possible inclusion of alternative indicators that reflect domestic challenges and political priorities. Some countries, such as Denmark, are undertaking a systematic assessment of new legislation with regard to its conformity with Sustainable Development Goal implementation. Overall, the process of incorporating the Goals into national legal and policy frameworks seems well advanced in the region.

25. The importance of broad political ownership was emphasized by various participants. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals requires a clear institutional framework, one in which the key role and contribution of the parliament is clearly recognized. In some countries, such as the Netherlands, existing procedures determine the involvement of the parliament on Goal implementation, including with regard to reporting and the connection to the budgeting process. The increased engagement of the legislature is an important trend throughout the region, but some participants, while recognizing ongoing progress, felt that more effort is needed to involve parliamentarians.

26. The Sustainable Development Goals need to be translated into a language that can be effectively used in political debate, as shown by the experience of Romania. Handbooks to assist parliamentarians may be useful as a part of a broader effort to communicate with and educate people about the Goals. Overall, increasing awareness of the Goals across multiple groups, including the media, is important. Advocacy work should have a broad reach, and include a range of constituencies and geographies to ensure the active participation of all actors at various levels. Innovative and media-friendly approaches can be useful when seeking to engage various groups. Accessible technologies should be deployed to reach persons with disabilities.

27. Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals requires the creation of appropriate coordination structures, which have an intrinsic intersectoral character. They may take various forms in different countries, depending on governments and national choices. Some participants remarked that institutional changes appear particularly challenging and that institutional innovations are desirable but have been limited.

28. Typical coordination mechanisms include national councils of sustainable development for top-level discussions and working groups and subgroups focusing on specific areas. In Belarus, particular emphasis has been put on wide representation within those mechanisms to ensure both horizontal and vertical coordination. In Armenia, a new institution, operating as a public-private partnership, has been created to support long-term strategic reforms and analyse existing strategies. In Montenegro, improving governance and strengthening institutional capacities are seen as significant factors in the early implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

29. The importance of the local level was stressed by some participants. While multiple ongoing initiatives already exist at the national level, there is much work

yet to be done at the regional and local levels. The relevance of the regional and local levels depends on the degree of decentralization, and it may be particularly significant for countries such as Switzerland, where lower levels of government have broad competencies. In any case, it is clear that, while the political impulse for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development came from national governments, authorities at all levels need to be brought on board for the successful adaptation and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Partnerships are key to advancing the Goals, and many of them can be struck at the local and regional levels. In some countries, support from the United Nations may be of use in reaching out to local and regional authorities and complementing their capacities.

30. Horizontal and vertical coordination across different policy areas and government levels is important, but multiple stakeholders should also be involved, in both implementation and monitoring. In particular, various participants emphasized the role of the private sector and that involving stakeholders was not a burden but a positive contribution to Sustainable Development Goal implementation.

31. Underlining the importance of civil society participation, there were proposals to bring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into educational curriculums, as championed by Norway, in order to further spread the knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals and their implications. Some participants emphasized the importance of youth as an agent of change and shared examples of existing country experiences that showed how to tap into that potential but, at the same time, others expressed concern that existing mechanisms for youth involvement were still insufficient.

32. There is a need to preserve policy stability beyond political changes and create a long-term vision for national development. In Turkey, different initiatives are anchored in long-term plans that identify core priorities. In Finland, a broad consensus on focus areas has been reached which is expected to survive changes in government. By contrast, specific actions to make progress in those particular areas may be subject to review, reflecting changing political choices.

33. Countries are experimenting with different schemes and learning from early experiences, which underlines the relevance of mechanisms for knowledge-sharing, as provided by the regional forum on sustainable development. Peer learning within and across different national constituencies is being sought but remains challenging. At the international level, the role of the European Sustainable Development Network was mentioned.

34. The importance of a monitoring and evaluation framework was stressed by many participants. As in the case for implementation, multiple partners should be involved in those efforts. In some cases, such as in Georgia for Sustainable Development Goal 16, a monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed for a particular Goal in order to build on that experience and develop a more comprehensive framework. Some participants remarked on the significance of evidence-based accountability for effective implementation and the fact that it should encompass all stakeholders.

35. Success in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals requires the mobilization of sufficient public and private resources. In most countries, Goals and their targets are linked to action plans that have clear connections with budgetary processes and resource allocation. In some countries, those action plans are used to raise funding from external donors. However, some countries emphasized that resources remain key constraints.

36. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is integrated and indivisible, and there are multiple linkages across the Sustainable Development Goals that

require concerted policy action. However, from a policy point of view, it is critical to look at those actions that have potentially larger impacts across multiple Goals. As available funds are likely to remain unchanged, it is important to focus priority efforts on initiatives that will offer larger results. The correct identification of the size of existing multipliers for policy interventions is not easy, but it would facilitate the establishment of priorities and the use of effectively limited budgetary resources. However, developing criteria for "smart spending" also faces difficulties in the presence of data limitations, including the absence of timelines for relevant variables.

37. There was broad agreement on the particular importance of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, not only as a separate goal but as a cross-cutting issue that greatly influences success in the implementation of other goals. Some countries, such as Belarus and Bulgaria, have made gender equality a particular focus of early Sustainable Development Goal implementation. In others, such as Sweden, gender budgeting is an established practice that evaluates the gender equality effects of budget policies. International partnerships, such as the one between Croatia and Finland, may serve to advance gender mainstreaming through training and knowledge-sharing.

38. The implementation of particular goals may benefit from international cooperation initiatives, such as the Mediterranean Action Plan, which will aid in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14. By contrast, a lack of clearly identified responsible authorities for implementation could create difficulties in meeting Goal 17.

39. Data remains a problem for the national adaptation and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, even in developed countries. Most countries are struggling with issues of data availability and reliability. Insufficient disaggregation creates difficulties in formulating and evaluating appropriate policies that leave no one behind. In the Netherlands, for example, around one third of indicators cannot yet be measured. In most countries, there are ongoing efforts to develop missing indicators. Civil society organizations raised the need to identify indicators that are relevant for the region, such as, for example, homelessness as an indicator for Goal 1, concerning growing and extreme poverty.

40. Efficient delivery of the support provided by the United Nations system is also an important element of success for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; it requires strong coordination efforts among United Nations entities. The regional United Nations system is assisting countries in multiple areas, including with regard to the alignment of national policy frameworks with the Goals, institutional arrangements and advocacy efforts. In particular, some participants stressed the role of the United Nations, including its regional commissions, in helping countries to address data problems. Sustainable Development Goal dashboards are being developed in some countries with the assistance of the United Nations.

41. Some participants also encouraged the regional forum to take advantage of relevant outcomes of the sixty-seventh session of ECE and their follow-up processes. That would not need to involve changes in the work programme of ECE or its budget, but it does demand increased collaboration with other United Nations agencies, drawing on past best practices, such as those related to the collaboration between ECE and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Regional round table II: subregional cooperation for Sustainable Development Goal implementation

42. The implementation of and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals is taking place at various levels: global, regional, subregional, national, subnational and local. All levels are necessary within a multilayered system to live up to the ambition and complexity of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The subregional level is very relevant, as geographical proximity, shared features and problems, as well as the existence of institutions, create a strong rationale for cooperation and the exchange of experiences and solutions, in particular in an area as diverse as the ECE region.

43. Against that background, regional round table II focused on the contribution of subregional cooperation to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The discussion was structured around three core issues: the thematic areas in which subregional cooperation is most useful; effective forms of cooperation at the subregional level; and the alignment of existing subregional cooperation structures with the Goals.

44. Participants put forward a range of thematic areas in which subregional cooperation could contribute to developing joint solutions. In a number of settings, subregional cooperation has focused on economic integration and cooperation, in particular trade and trade facilitation, cross-border investment and infrastructure, among a limited number of countries. The subregional level is also considered instrumental for cooperation on environmental challenges and the management of shared natural resources, including fresh water, oceans and seas, fishery and marine pollution.

45. Moreover, participants highlighted a number of other areas in which approaches at the subregional level or among a limited number of countries concerned have been pursued, such as environment, water, migration, energy, agriculture, health and youth. Subregional initiatives in those areas have mainly been chosen to address transboundary issues, better respond to emerging challenges and create enabling conditions for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Russian Federation said that refraining from unilateral economic measures and harmonizing existing integration processes was essential for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the regional level.

46. It was also stressed that the exchange of experiences, capacity-building and learning with regard to the collection of data and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals at the subregional level has proven useful, for instance within the framework of a multi-country exchange organized by the United Nations Development Programme's regional hub in Istanbul. In addition, the subregional level could play an important role in the follow-up and review of relevant Goals.

47. Civil society representatives expressed the view that subregional cooperation in many instances is heavily focused on economic integration, and trade in particular. Extending subregional cooperation to broader issues such as human rights and gender equality would represent a step forward.

48. Reflecting different themes, constituencies and objectives, there is significant diversity among the forms and modalities of subregional cooperation. They range from informal dialogues, thematic initiatives and coalitions to formal intergovernmental organizations and legally binding instruments, which are mainly driven by governments and/or international organizations.

49. A number of United Nations entities presented examples of subregional dialogues, initiatives, partnerships and coalitions, which are contributing to joint solutions and advancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in certain areas.

50. International migration is one of the issues for which subregional and regional cooperation is of crucial importance. Cooperation and dialogue on migration has been expanding in different frameworks, actively supported by the International Organization for Migration. Many countries are looking at ways to support the achievement of migration-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Regional Consultative Processes on Migration, which promote policy dialogue, cooperation and partnership on migration issues among their member States, provide a well-regarded model for cooperation. They are State-led and ongoing, informal and mostly non-binding. Those types of forums have shown to be effective at building consensus and enabling dialogue and joint work on migration. In that context, subregional and regional consultations contribute to the ongoing intergovernmental process in the General Assembly to develop a global compact for safe, regular and orderly migration, which should, for the first time, present a comprehensive framework for migration governance.

51. Taking into account subregional commonalities with regard to environmental degradation and climate change, cooperation among countries on the management of environmental resources, sustainable agriculture and rural livelihoods could yield significant benefits, for instance in Central Asia. Subregional dialogue and collaboration on Sustainable Development Goal 2 is facilitated and supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other United Nations and non-United Nations partners. One example of a specific initiative is the Eurasian Soil Partnership, which promotes sustainable soil management among governments and other stakeholders of 13 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

52. Several subregional initiatives are driven by common challenges in the areas of health and population, including the South-eastern Europe Health Network, the Nordic/Baltic policy dialogue on implementing the Health 2020 vision of WHO and the Black Sea Countries Coalition on Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention. UNFPA also supports a regional youth network to promote training and education on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention and an initiative among 17 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia to strengthen the health system response to gender-based violence.

53. Other initiatives under the auspices of the WHO Regional Office for Europe underline that cooperation is not only triggered by geographic proximity, but also by similar circumstances and challenges. That involves, for instance, cooperation on health issues of cities across Europe (within the WHO European Healthy Cities Network), subnational regions (within the Regions for Health Network) and small countries (the small countries initiative).

54. Intergovernmental cooperation within subregional organizations and initiatives is a well-established method of achieving progress in areas of common concern. There is a long-standing tradition of cooperation among the five Nordic countries. The Nordic Council of Ministers promotes cooperation among governments in areas such as environment and youth. The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation focuses on cooperation among its 12 member States in trade, economic development, road and maritime infrastructure, green energy and agriculture. The broad areas of cooperation among the 18 member States of the Central European Initiative include sustainable economic development and knowledge-based and inclusive societies. In 2016, under the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the

Central European Initiative advanced cooperation with other international and subregional organizations, including the United Nations and the Baltic States.

55. Legally binding instruments are a strong mechanism of subregional cooperation. In particular, the major role of the Regional Seas Conventions and their related Action Plans and of regional fisheries management organizations were emphasized as effective examples of cross-sectoral cooperation on oceans, seas and marine resources, which are shared by neighbouring countries. That includes instruments administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): the Mediterranean Action Plan and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention) and the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention). It also includes other regional bodies beyond those administered by UNEP.

56. Cooperation on oceans and seas can also be fruitful between a few coastal states for the preservation and sustainable management of a particular area. One example is the trilateral "RAMOGE" agreement among France, Italy and Monaco, aimed at preventing and reducing marine pollution along a coastal stretch connecting the three States. In addition, the application of regional or global agreements at the subregional level or even in a local cross-border context was highlighted as an important aspect. For example, cooperation on water management between the Canton of Geneva in Switzerland and neighbouring communities in France takes place within the overall framework of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention).

57. A number of more informal initiatives with a subregional perspective are actively contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In more formal cooperation structures, efforts to review and align activities and instruments with the Goals are ongoing. For instance, within the Nordic Council of Ministers, a joint initiative on the Goals is under way, as well as a Goal mapping exercise and the integration of the Goals into the existing cooperation among Nordic countries. Within the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the focus on joint action for Goal implementation is being strengthened. Notwithstanding those positive examples, some participants expressed the view that there is still potential to raise awareness of the Goals and accelerate their integration into some subregional and regional activities.

58. In view of a rich and dynamic landscape of subregional mechanisms, several participants stressed that horizontal coordination, cooperation and coherence between various subregional and regional platforms was essential, as was vertical consistency at the local, national and global levels. Within the United Nations, the creation of issue-based coalitions on health, gender, adolescents and youth, social protection and migration by the regional United Nations system in Europe and Central Asia was referred to as an innovative approach to coordinate activities among different United Nations agencies, which was, at the same time, open to the involvement of external partners.

59. Several participants emphasized the importance of developing multi-stakeholder partnerships as a crucial means of Sustainable Development Goal implementation, including at the subregional level. Partnerships and coalitions involving all relevant international organizations, local authorities, civil society, academia and businesses will be an important complement to intergovernmental cooperation. Some participants, including from the science community, called for the strengthening of dialogue and a more systematic involvement of science and research institutions. The Ocean and Climate Initiatives Alliance was mentioned as a promising

multi-stakeholder action framework to implement the Paris Agreement on climate change and contribute to the achievement of the Goals beyond climate issues, in particular Goal 14.

60. Representatives from civil society called for a meaningful and institutionalized involvement of civil society in Sustainable Development Goal implementation, follow-up and review at all levels, including regional and subregional levels. The creation of a regional civil society engagement mechanism could be useful in that regard and in the light of shrinking space and funding constraints for civil society engagement in parts of the region. Civil society stands ready as a partner not only in discussions, but also as a source of advice and expertise in the implementation of the Goals.

Regional round table III: data and monitoring

61. The comprehensive and ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underscores the importance of quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data to measure progress and ensure that no one is left behind. The statistical community has taken up that challenge and initiated Sustainable Development Goal-related activities at national, regional and global levels.

62. Against that background, regional round table III provided the opportunity for policymakers and statisticians to share insights on core issues with regard to Sustainable Development Goal data and monitoring. The discussion was structured around the role and limits of official statistics, cooperation between policymakers and statisticians, the strengthening of statistical capacities and coordination and cooperation among different actors.

63. The first United Nations World Data Forum in January 2017 brought together data producers and data users and launched a global action plan for sustainable development data. At the global level, in March 2017, the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted a global indicator framework with more than 240 Sustainable Development Goal indicators as well as a draft resolution that included basic elements regarding data flows between the national and global levels.

64. At the national level, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals has started in many countries with the adoption or adjustment of national sustainable development strategies. National councils for sustainable development have been established, often with extensive consultation processes and the engagement of multiple actors. The national strategies provide the basis for national statistical systems to develop national indicators in an open stakeholder process to enable tracking the progress in implementing those strategies, and to develop national action plans to produce the data. In some countries, such as Albania, baseline reports for Sustainable Development Goals are being developed.

65. Policymakers need timely and reliable data for evidence-based decision-making. As pointed out by several participants, interaction and dialogue between policymakers and statisticians is therefore of great importance. To achieve sustainable development, it is also critically important to strengthen statistical communication and allow all users equal access to data, following the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics as set out by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/261.

66. National statistical offices have a key coordinating role in generating, disseminating and administering Sustainable Development Goal-related data. Countries are currently able to produce roughly about one third of the Goal indicators. Even developed countries with strong statistical systems, such as

Germany, cannot produce more than half. Participants agreed that all countries need to increase their statistical capacity. In some instances, there may be a need to strengthen the statistical institutional framework to ensure the necessary coordination with other actors, including academia, civil society and the private sector, and to improve statistical quality, as highlighted by Montenegro. That requires political support and appropriate funding. Education to improve statistical literacy among present and future generations is also necessary.

67. Support should also come from donors, through South-South cooperation and partnerships. Several participants observed that there was a need to think differently about statistical capacity-building, namely to learn to better coordinate and match the supply and demand for capacity-building, and look for partnerships. Examples of such partnerships were mentioned, such as "twinning projects" conducted with the involvement of the European Union and the World Bank.

68. The United Nations system also has an important role to play in providing capacity-building to countries, with specialized agencies offering support in their areas of expertise. Concepts used for developing countries could be tailored to the needs of developed countries, as suggested by FAO. The WHO Regional Office for Europe had been asked by its member States to propose a process for establishing a joint monitoring framework that includes common indicators of the Health 2020 framework, the Sustainable Development Goals and the global action plan on non-communicable diseases, resulting in a reduced list of core indicators. UNFPA pointed out that 93 indicators are population-based and stressed the strong synergies between the Goals and the International Conference on Population and Development process. UNFPA also mentioned its collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund in middle-income countries in the region and with WHO on data and indicators related to sexual and reproductive health. The International Labour Organization and others emphasized the necessity for the United Nations system to come together and develop joint capacity-building programmes, as most Goal indicators are under the custodianship of more than one United Nations agency.

69. The regional road map developed by the Conference of European Statisticians steering group on statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals was considered a useful tool to provide practical guidance to countries to build up a robust measurement system for the Goals. Statisticians in the ECE region are piloting and exploring solutions that can be used later by countries in other regions.

70. For member States of the European Union, Eurostat is producing official statistics according to requirements set by a code of practice. The European Environment Agency is collecting data from a network of about 39 countries in specific focus areas, and pointed out the challenge of filtering out relevant, timely and high-quality data.

71. OECD has undertaken a pilot study of selected member States to establish their starting positions on individual targets to help governments with the development of national action plans.

72. The WHO Regional Office for Europe proposed the establishment of a European information initiative, mirroring its own European Health Information Initiative, to coordinate information and statistical issues in the region with all stakeholders at regular intervals.

73. Some participants, including from civil society organizations, pointed to specific issues and groups addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals with a particular need for more and better-quality data, including on migration, human trafficking, early marriage, older persons and persons with disabilities. It was also suggested that countries in the ECE region could go beyond the baseline established

in the global indicator framework and develop more ambitious indicators to take the lead on specific issues, for example with regard to gender equality, as supported by Monaco. The Council of Europe proposed that accession to specific legally binding conventions and the results of related monitoring mechanisms could serve as indicators at the regional level for a specific target, such as its Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Other participants emphasized areas that are new to official statistics, such as governance or means of implementation and human rights indicators. Methods to measure those areas in an internationally agreed and comparable way need to be developed.

74. There was agreement that not all of the Sustainable Development Goal data could be produced by using traditional methods, and some warned that work on missing indicators should not distract countries from developing and strengthening their national statistical systems.

75. Some of the Sustainable Development Goal data would need to come from outside the official statistical system. Big data and geospatial, satellite and administrative data all needed to be considered. Participation from academia, the private sector, civil society and the media, among others, was needed in that regard.

76. However, using alternative sources came with its own challenges because data quality often might not be sufficient and the information source might not be sustainable. Ensuring data confidentiality and reducing respondent burden were also important concerns. The Conference of European Statisticians, through its High-level Group for the Modernization of Official Statistics, is working actively to explore the use of other data sources, such as administrative registers and big data.

77. Several participants, including Canada and the Russian Federation, highlighted the need to streamline the various international reporting processes, as there was significant overlap among the different reporting frameworks.

78. In conclusion, participants emphasized that no country or organization could succeed on its own: collaboration and cooperation were needed at all levels and with all relevant stakeholders to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The round table had provided a useful opportunity for dialogue, mutual learning and the exchange of experience. ECE was encouraged to continue such dialogues in the framework of the regional forum on a regular basis, taking advantage of other regional and global processes to maximize impact.

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Input from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits the input from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

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Summary of the Chair of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development

[Original: Spanish]

I. Introduction

1. At the thirty-sixth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), held in Mexico City from 23 to 27 May 2016, the member States adopted resolution 700(XXXVI), brokered by Mexico, establishing the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development as a regional mechanism to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and its means of implementation, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

2. The first meeting of the Forum was held in Mexico City, from 26 to 28 April 2017. The meeting was chaired by Mexico, in its capacity as Chair of the Committee of the Whole of ECLAC, and convened under the auspices of the Commission.

3. The meeting of the Forum was open to States, the United Nations system, regional and subregional bodies, international financial institutions, the private sector and civil society.

4. The purpose of the first meeting of the Forum was for Latin American and Caribbean countries was to share experiences and best practices. It was divided into three segments: (1) the presentation of reports by ECLAC and its subsidiary bodies, (2) peer reviews moderated by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Colombia, and Mexico, and (3) an analysis of the three dimensions of development, namely economic, social and environmental. In addition, two special sessions were held on artificial intelligence and means of implementation.

II. Annual report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[1]

5. The report prepared by the ECLAC secretariat as a contribution to the discussions at the first meeting of the Forum underscored that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals represented the consensus of governments and different stakeholders to work towards a transformative vision of economic, social and environmental sustainability. It was a civilizing, universal, indivisible and rights-based agenda. The report covered three areas: an analysis of the progress made thus far and the challenges ahead, a description of national institutional mechanisms existing in the region for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and an analysis of the challenges and opportunities involved in building and measuring Sustainable Development Goal indicators. The complexity of the 2030 Agenda meant that the goals had to be integrated and that the inertia of fragmentation and compartmentalization must be set aside.

[1] ECLAC, *Annual report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/L.4268(FDS.1/3), April 2017.

6. The five tensions that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development could help to solve were: the recessionary bias resulting from persistent trade imbalances, the high levels of instability and uncertainty created by financial globalization, the need to close the gaps between the winners and losers of globalization, migration-related conflicts and the need for sustainable peace, and the need to protect the planet and future generations' right to development. In light of those tensions, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals had to be reaffirmed so that no one was left behind.

7. The report warned that inequality and hyperglobalization, or globalization in the hands of a few, posed one of the world's greatest challenges. It was imperative that everyone could benefit from development and that no one was left behind.

8. In sum, the ECLAC report underscored the need to restore international cooperation, going beyond trade and multilateralism to include a new and invigorated role for regional integration; to participate fully in the technology revolution; to promote an environmental big push; to eliminate poverty and strengthen equality; to mobilize financial resources with a focus on middle-income countries, small island developing States, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries; to build new capacity and to broaden the participation of all actors in society. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda calls for a review of governance at the global, regional and national levels; the incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans, budgets and business models; meeting the challenge of measuring and following up the Sustainable Development Goals by strengthening national statistical systems and data systems designed for this purpose and developing new indicators; the analysis of means of implementation, particularly with respect to financing, technology, fair trade and access to information; and the achievement of intersectoral and interinstitutional coordination and the participation of all stakeholders, including businesses and civil society. Hence, a new policy dialogue is needed amid the rapid transformation of the economy, policy and technology, and a period of uncertainty for the region.

III. Dialogue on the contribution of the subsidiary bodies of ECLAC and major intergovernmental meetings to the 2030 Agenda[2]

9. The Chairs of the subsidiary bodies of ECLAC participated in a panel discussion, in which it was confirmed that those bodies represented important forums in which to advance discussions on the regional vision with respect to implementing the 2030 Agenda, and that existing synergies should be further strengthened. Coordination must be achieved in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to harmonize policies and actions.

[2] The dialogue was held in two rounds. In the first round, statements were made by the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies of ECLAC, the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee, the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Ministerial Forum for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The second round included the Regional Council for Planning of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Committee on South-South Cooperation, the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and the Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean.

10. The importance of the joint work carried out between these bodies was also acknowledged. The joint efforts of the Statistical Conference of the Americas and the Regional Conference on Women and the contributions made by the Working Group on Gender Statistics in the context of the Statistical Conference, as well as the incorporation of the issue of georeferencing at the Conference, were all commended.

11. The panel insisted on the need to continue promoting cooperation between the different agencies, funds and specialized programmes. The joint work carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and ECLAC in the framework of the Regional Conference on Social Development and the Ministerial Forum on Development is a relevant example. South-South cooperation is an essential component of progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, over 1,400 actions are under way in the region on education and health, multidimensional poverty measurement and institutional capacity-building. Moving forward, the challenge will be to improve the coordination of the regional actions of all participants in South-South cooperation.

12. The importance of developing indicators tailored to regional needs was also reiterated. The Regional Conference on Population and Development has taken great steps forward in this area, with the lines of action, targets and indicators established in the Operational guide for the implementation and follow-up of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development. The Montevideo Consensus and its priority measures provide a set of precise, comparable, measurable and clearly defined indicators that are aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The importance of planning is reflected in the 2030 Agenda, and various countries in the region have consequently incorporated aspects of the Agenda into their national development plans and budgets, and 20 countries have already put in place coordination mechanisms for the 2030 Agenda.

IV. United Nations Development Group-Latin America and the Caribbean (UNDG-LAC)

13. The United Nations Development Group - Latin America and the Caribbean (UNDG-LAC) presented a document at the Regional Forum entitled "Leaving no one behind in Latin America and the Caribbean: overcoming inequality to eradicate poverty". The document indicated that the 2030 Agenda demanded a redefinition of problems and challenges, as well as solutions, using a multidimensional approach that took synergies and interconnections into account. In addition, implementation tools must be coordinated within countries to avoid fragmentation between ministries, sectors and territories, and disaggregated statistical or administrative data are a key important tool. Structural changes are needed, not just in the economic sphere, but also in the social and environmental spheres, to ensure fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda principle of leaving no one behind.

14. Through its country teams, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supports efforts made at the national level to achieve the 2030 Agenda Goals and promotes a coordinated strategy of mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support (MAPS). MAPS was formulated by UNDP to identify immediate and priority action areas, as well as possible alliances and opportunities for support, to ensure that the knowledge and experience of the United Nations system is available to the countries and to design frameworks for monitoring and measuring implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level. UNDP is working on this strategy with 31 of the 33 countries in the region.

15. From a life cycle perspective, the joint document warns that, given the lack of social security contributions and the enormous needs of the care system, the region is faced with a challenge to maintain and improve per capita income and to preserve the income security of older persons.

16. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) views work as a social lynchpin and a necessary component in the construction of inclusive, prosperous and solidarity-based societies. Many issues must be addressed in the region, including access to higher education, adolescent pregnancy and early unions.

17. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works jointly with other partners and United Nations agencies to jointly address the challenges of 2030 Agenda implementation, including — with ECLAC — identifying equity indicators for monitoring SDG 3 and — with the Organization of American States (OAS) — the mapping of joint actions for the realization of the 2030 Agenda. The Organization considers it essential to reduce health inequalities, especially among vulnerable groups such as rural and indigenous populations, and counts social security and lack of inclusion among the region's greatest challenges.

18. The World Food Programme (WFP) views food security in the region as a key component in development. Furthermore, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will require investment in social protection networks in order to build resilient societies. Women, with their fundamental role in poor and vulnerable communities, play a vital part in this process. Local communities must be empowered and more must be invested in the decentralization of social protection networks and in disaster preparedness and emergency response through these social protection networks.

19. In order to advance from an operational stage to a programmatic stage, governments must exercise leadership in reflecting implementations needs in budgets.

V. International agencies and financial institutions

20. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) views a revitalized global alliance as essential to ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Official development assistance plays a strategic role in capacity-building for sustainable development, and the call for developed countries to allocate 0.7% of GDP to this assistance must not be forgotten. In this regard, CELAC will continue to engage in systematic follow-up and review processes on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The member countries of CELAC remain committed to achieving sustainable development in an integrated and balanced manner across its three dimensions, as agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by proposing shared solutions to regional and global challenges for the benefit of society. In this regard, it is vital to ensure the availability of financial resources and non-financial resources, such as capacity-building and the development, transfer and dissemination of clean technologies under favourable conditions.

VI. Civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders

21. The representatives of civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders underscored that the 2030 Agenda called for collaborative efforts to achieve shared goals, targets and indicators. The challenges of sustainable

development include economic, social and political elements that are interlinked and that require coordinated responses from all stakeholders.

22. Although governments are responsible for implementing the 2030 Agenda according to their national priorities and capacity, society also needs to play an active role. With a view to ensuring that no one is left behind, the inclusion of civil society is crucial, especially in the current context of setbacks with respect to discrimination and wealth concentration, and of growing conservatism that poses a threat to the social milestones achieved thus far, such as the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.

23. The 2030 Agenda is promoting a new paradigm, placing individuals and the defence of their human rights at the centre of policies. States should encourage a new people-centred, governance-based sustainable development model. Moreover, the vital participation of civil society calls for an enabling environment and access to reliable statistics, as well as a participatory culture and accountability in policies relating to the Sustainable Development Goals.

24. The private sector's commitment to achieving these Goals is indispensable. The United Nations Global Compact is helping to mobilize this sector in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through local networks in 14 Latin American and Caribbean countries by building political momentum and capacity in businesses so that they can align their strategies with the Goals; ensuring that these companies participate in public-private forums; establishing partnerships with various entities; and promoting financial resources to fund the Goals.

VII. Peer learning on voluntary national reviews of the member countries of the Forum (institutional arrangements, national measurements and challenges and priorities)[1]

25. The three countries — the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Colombia and Mexico — that presented voluntary national reviews at the 2016 high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, shared their experiences with the other countries. Meanwhile, the 11 countries that will present voluntary national reviews in 2017 reported on the progress made.

26. During the discussions, the participating countries reiterated that the 2030 Agenda was a global, long-term commitment that would require the State, not just the government, to take ownership of the framework. Policies must go beyond government terms of office and include all sectors.

27. The three main areas for ensuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals are institutional structures, planning mechanisms and the means of measurement and the development of indicators. The institutional inertia of viewing the State in a compartmentalized manner is a barrier that must be overcome, in order to develop a rationale of integration instead. National policies and plans must also be updated to align them with the Sustainable Development Goals, ensure sound planning and coordinate tasks among different institutions.

[1] The discussion was organized into three panels. The first was moderated by Mexico and comprised the focal points for national implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Peru. The second was moderated by Colombia and the participating countries were El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama. The third panel was moderated by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with representatives of Belize, Costa Rica and Uruguay participating.

28. The countries in the region have chosen one of two options: either to create new institutions to follow up implementation of the 2030 Agenda or to modify the mandates of existing institutions. Most of those follow-up mechanisms are headed by the President and involve a variety of ministries and stakeholders. That demonstrates that the 2030 Agenda is not the sole preserve of one sector, that requires political will and leadership at the highest level, and that its inclusive nature calls for the participation of all sectors of the State.

29. Each country has established its own planning mechanisms, on the basis of its national capacities and priorities. The Goals are aspirational, and each country may choose how to implement them. Although some have chosen to divide the 17 Goals into thematic clusters, they all recognize their integrated nature and the indivisibility of the 2030 Agenda. By nature, this development framework will evolve over time and it will be necessary to analyse how it is implemented in the region over the years.

30. As well as the institutional arrangements, some countries have adapted their national development plans to the 2030 Agenda or even designed them on that basis.

31. In relation to financing, one of the major challenges lies in channeling specific resources towards implementing the 2030 Agenda. Some of the region's countries are engaged in aligning their budgets to the Goals, given that budgetary resources are essential to achieving them. Governments must invest resources in the pursuit of the Goals. In addition, given the ambition of the 2030 Agenda and the scarcity of resources, the banking sector must be engaged in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in order to achieve collaboration between public and private investment. Incentives must be created for the private sector to align with the public interest. It is important to optimize public resources, by improving the quality of public spending and fostering public-private partnerships.

32. The countries recognized the extreme importance of multi-stakeholder engagement for the implementation of the Agenda, especially the participation of civil society, including academia and the private sector, which tends to be absent. All the stakeholders must take ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals and create groups and networks to support their implementation. Parliaments play an essential role in approving budgets to support efforts aimed at achieving the Goals, and in ensuring accountability and reflecting the concerns of the population.

33. Given their importance, matters relating to financing and the means of implementation need to be widely discussed. For that reason, the countries commended the initiative put forward by ECLAC to hold a regional consultation on financing of the Sustainable Development Goals in the region. This would be an opportunity to discuss these issues with the banking sector and with regional and international financial agencies, and to coordinate the 2030 Agenda with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

34. The countries insisted that measurement was fundamental, since it was the only way to ascertain progress. Individuals must be able to access reliable and effective information. Efforts must be made to develop new information sources, such as tax information systems, and to improve national accounts systems. The greatest challenges refer to the disaggregation of statistical data, the strengthening of national statistical systems and the incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals into budgeting and planning processes at the national, local and territorial levels.

VIII. Special session on artificial intelligence

35. This segment of the Forum's agenda clearly showed that exponential technological change was one of the greatest challenges facing the international community. Technology can make a decisive contribution to fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, but poses risks as well. Harmless in itself, technology has effects that depend on the use it is put to and the decisions taken.

36. It is calculated that 75 million jobs could be replaced by robots and new processes linked to artificial intelligence over the next 10 to 15 years. This may raise productivity while at the same time having pernicious effects on the production structure, as well as social consequences. Employment is one of the indispensable conditions for reducing world poverty. Technology, not migration, has been the greatest factor behind job losses in developed countries.

37. Digital technologies are not only exponential in themselves, but interact within a digital ecosystem and combine with others to create new ones. Accordingly, it is vital to know which of them are driving the deepest changes: quantum computing, so powerful that it can defeat all today's asymmetric encryption systems; the Internet of things, connecting everyone on all devices; digital cloud interconnectivity, making information and connections available to everyone everywhere; robotics for service provision; big data for smart information management; self-driving vehicles, making more efficient and personal transportation available to persons with disabilities; and artificial intelligence, replacing human processes with robots. To predict the effect of exponential technologies, we need to set out from a clear diagnosis and invest more and better in areas of opportunity rather than being left chasing behind an unstoppable process.

38. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean were not part of the industrial revolution or the knowledge economy. Now, however, they need to join the digital revolution. For this, public policies need to provide for sustained investment in research and development, which now totals less than 1% of GDP in the region (by comparison, the Republic of Korea spends 4.3% of GDP); the training of a new generation of scientists and technologists to make this change; and true broadband to facilitate connectivity. Besides public investment, public-private partnerships are essential if the targets envisaged are to be met. Profound changes and long-term commitment are needed.

39. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean need to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the fourth industrial revolution and the 2030 Agenda to design public policies that can enhance people's quality of life through the application of exponential technologies and innovations, on which sustainable development for all depends so much. The region's countries can benefit from the development and use of big data to formulate more effective and comprehensive public policies that meet the needs of the population with long-term results. We need to make big data an instrument of the fourth industrial revolution, which can also become a social revolution.

40. Exponential technologies could become an essential tool for making good educational and staffing shortcomings in the area of research and development. There is a need for structural changes to enhance capacity-building and for knowledge to be imparted with a view to producing more globally competitive human resources and highly skilled migration. It is indispensable for solid infrastructure frameworks to be built to make these tools universally accessible.

41. Another imperative need is to ensure the subject is discussed and followed up at the highest level, since cooperation will be essential to prevent and forestall the

possible negative effects of these technologies and see to it that they are employed to fulfil the 2030 Agenda. At the end of the special session, it was agreed that a working group of the region's countries would be set up to reflect and decide on lines of action for exponential technologies and develop road maps. This working group could help in identifying and reaching an understanding of the great risks and opportunities entailed by technological change.

IX. Dialogues on eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world in the framework of sustainable development*

42. Integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development is central to achieving the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development. There are four challenges to this integration: the conceptual challenge, overcoming the region's established practice of working by sector; the technical challenge, identifying the priorities that define the three dimensions and their points of interaction; the institutional challenge, addressing the fragmented nature and inertia of the institutions that should be focused on sustainable development; and the challenge of evaluating the level of integration between economic, social and environmental policies. To this end, efforts should be made at the national and regional levels and in the framework of the United Nations to prepare for discussions on progress in this area at the next meeting of the Forum.

The economic dimension

43. Economic growth remains slow in Latin America and the Caribbean, largely as a result of the ineffectiveness of the traditional growth model followed by the region, based on exports of commodities and manufactures and attracting foreign direct investment. Global geopolitical conditions are currently highly complex and present new challenges. A new growth strategy is needed in which the domestic market plays a central role throughout the business cycle, together with a renewed focus on investment policies and better management of the investment cycle. Latin America needs a more developmental macroeconomy in order to meet the commitments of the 2030 Agenda.

44. Poverty cannot be combated unless inequality is addressed. Growth must be made inclusive. Because it is people-centred, the 2030 Agenda requires that a country's economic growth should also improve the quality of life of its citizens. The 2030 Agenda is universal and is not aimed solely at developing countries.

45. In order to mobilize resources for sustainable development, developing countries will have to exercise political will and the architecture of international financial institutions will have to be redesigned. Furthermore, Latin America and the Caribbean must integrate further in order to counteract protectionist trends, which are causing great uncertainty in the countries. Accordingly, in addition to adopting a national approach to the 2030 Agenda, regional integration should be vigorously pursued.

46. Poverty has been reduced in the region; however, the picture changes when non-income factors are taken into account. All countries must generate indicators that measure poverty in all its dimensions.

* The dimensions addressed Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14 in three round tables developed to the three dimensions of sustainable development: round table 1: the economic dimension; round table 2: the social dimension; and round table 3: the environmental dimension.

47. Growth is necessary, but not sufficient on its own: a structural change is needed. Faced with an economic recession, productivity must be improved, social spending increased and informal employment reduced. The State must also implement redistributive policies and strengthen social security systems. Public-private partnerships will be key to infrastructure investment.

The social dimension

48. At least 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals are linked to the social dimension. Social issues overlap, so social development is an investment with positive returns for economic growth and environmental protection.

49. A major achievement is that, in recent years, the idea of social welfare has spread throughout the region. Latin America and the Caribbean have moved away from clientelist policies towards a more social-rights-based approach. Social protection is important but not enough on its own; occupational training and job creation programmes must also be expanded. We must change the development model and change current production models to promote decent work, protect workers and train them in new technologies.

50. State action must be made stronger, in the sense of rethinking the State-market-society equation and looking for a model centred on rights and people. Regulatory frameworks for trade, finance and taxes must be in place and a fairer distribution of income ensured.

51. To enact social welfare, structural inequalities must be addressed, including socioeconomic, gender-based, ethnic, racial and territorial inequalities and those related to the human life cycle. Social goals must be aligned and made consistent with economic goals, as inequality is incompatible with growth. The 2030 Agenda seeks, above all, to leave no one behind. This will not be possible without social inclusion.

The environmental dimension

52. Development policies must take into account the environmental dimension. Production must rise to boost economic growth, but measures in that direction must take into account social welfare and environmental protection. All 17 Sustainable Development Goals include aspects of the environmental agenda and 86 targets relate directly to environmental issues.

53. Climate change has led to extreme weather events, loss of biodiversity and an increase in the number of endangered species. Moreover, as a highly urbanized region, Latin America produces a great deal of waste, more than 10% of the world total, owing, among other factors, to a lack of recycling. Policymaking requires four changes: (i) develop integrated programmes; (ii) break the link between production and pollution (decoupling); (iii) move towards low carbon economies (decarbonization); and (iv) detoxify the air, soil and water.

54. Disasters hit the most vulnerable populations the hardest. The effects of climate change, such as food insecurity, cascade down. Issues related to development, disaster risk and the environment must be linked, particularly in island countries. The most recent international agreements, such as the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, are a step towards integrating these concepts. Statistics show that unsustainable development, human and social behaviour and climate change combine to increase risks. The Sustainable Development Goal indicators must be integrated with those of the Sendai Framework in order to obtain information to adopt measures that are fit for purpose.

X. Special session on the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

55. Given its scope, achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires considerable financial and non-financial resources, which are scarce. International cooperation, the mobilization of resources and upgrading of tax systems are therefore crucial.

56. Partnerships with the private sector are also essential. The greatest challenge facing public policy is to reconcile the interests of the private sector with those of the public sector. The region also faces significant challenges with regard to resource mobilization, largely as a result of low levels of taxation.

57. International trade could be a driver of development, but resources must be distributed equitably. Foreign direct investment encourages growth, but growth alone is not enough. The fundamental issue is how to transform global liquidity into savings and use those savings to finance public works and development projects.

58. Since not all financing goes to development, governments must develop public policies to steer financing towards this aim.

59. A comprehensive analysis must be undertaken of United Nations agencies' capacities in order to define the role that each agency should play in support of the 2030 Agenda. How United Nations agencies will finance the pillars of development and by how much must also be assessed, as currently only 5%-6% of the Organization's budget is earmarked for the development pillar. The United Nations does not pursue goals on its own initiative — rather, the States do so, but it is the responsibility of the United Nations to have the necessary resources and competencies to support countries' efforts.

60. Sustainable peace has been proposed as a transformative component of conflict prevention. The concept has accordingly been put forward as an important element in the agenda of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

XI. Conclusions on the regional challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda

61. The international context in which Latin America and the Caribbean is undertaking to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is marked by trade imbalances, rising poverty and environmental degradation caused by hyperglobalization. This is compounded by the weakening of multilateralism and of international solidarity amid the resurgence of unilateralist worldviews, protectionist trends and xenophobic political forces. In our countries, inequality conspires against economic growth.

62. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals offer a way to correct those imbalances, asymmetries and polarization, and to achieve inclusive and sustainable development that "leaves no one behind" and protects the environment.

63. In addition to the adverse international conditions, the challenges facing the region in terms of developing the global development framework are: (1) overcoming policy fragmentation; (2) achieving timely, accurate and open information and indicators; (3) dealing with the implications of exponential technological change; (4) directing financial and non-financial resources to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; and (5) ending inequality.

64. Regional cooperation is the ideal way to achieve the Goals adopted two years ago by the United Nations General Assembly. Latin America and the Caribbean is setting an example to other regions, by matching the commitments undertaken in September 2015 with actions.

65. Every country has different approaches, visions of the future, models and instruments for achieving sustainable development, depending on its circumstances and national priorities. The representatives reaffirmed that the planet Earth and its ecosystems are our common home and that " Mother Earth" is an expression used in many countries and regions that acknowledges the rights of nature and recognizes that the most vulnerable, including indigenous populations, must be empowered.

66. The 2030 Agenda has a significant forerunner in our region. Popol Vuh, the holy book of the Mayas, says: "Let everyone arise, let everyone be called, let no one be left behind; not one, not two, but all as one".

XII. Conclusions and recommendations of the first meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development

67. The conclusions and recommendations of the first meeting of the Forum were discussed and agreed upon in a contact group, which met during the three days of the meeting. The agreed language was submitted to the plenary, where it was adopted unanimously. The conclusions and recommendations of the Forum will be presented by Mexico, as Chair of the Forum, to the high-level political forum of the United Nations at its meeting on 10-19 July 2017.

Annex

[Original: English]

Intergovermentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of the first meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development

We, the Ministers and high representatives gathered at the first meeting of the Forum of Latin American and Caribbean Countries on Sustainable Development convened under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Mexico City,

1. *Reaffirm* the commitment of our countries and of our region with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, stressing that it is people-centred, universal and transformative, that its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental — and that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development,

2. *Reaffirm also* the commitment to leave no one behind and acknowledge that empowering those who are vulnerable is crucial to sustainable development,

3. *Recall* that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda provides a global framework for financing sustainable development, is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supports and complements it and helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, recognize the synergies of the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito, Ecuador, the SAMOA Pathway and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recommend further strengthening of multilateral cooperation at the regional and global levels for their effective implementation, and acknowledge the importance of the regional conferences and processes for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,

4. *Highlight* that with the first meeting of this new forum, the Latin American and Caribbean Countries have advanced in implementing the 2030 Agenda by engaging in a systematic process of follow-up and review at the regional level, building on existing mechanisms, which provides useful opportunities for regional cooperation and peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on agreed targets and identified challenges, as well as for convening regional contributions to the High-level Political Forum and the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development, and in this regard recommend further engagement in coming years,

5. *Commend* the three countries of the region that presented voluntary national reviews at the High-level Political Forum under the auspices of ECOSOC in 2016, and the eleven countries preparing for doing the same in 2017, and highlight the commitment and leadership shown by these fourteen countries in their early steps to implement the 2030 Agenda, including by integrating it into their national development and sustainable development strategies,[5] recommend further volunteering, and look forward to appropriate allocation of time and feedback at the

[5] In 2016: Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela. In 2017: Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Peru and Uruguay.

ministerial segment of the High-level Political Forum under the auspices of ECOSOC,

6. *Recognize* the importance to continue to address the diverse needs and challenges faced by countries in special situations, in particular least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as the specific challenges facing middle-income countries and countries in situation of conflict and post conflict,

7. *Reiterate* the call on the United Nations system, in consultation with the international financial institutions, to develop transparent measurements of progress on sustainable development that go beyond per capita income and recognize poverty in all of its forms and dimensions, as well as the social, economic and environmental dimensions of domestic output and structural gaps at all levels, for effectively eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities within and among countries, and further recommend to continue building institutional capacities for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, including for data collection and monitoring,

8. *Recommend* ECLAC, through the Statistical Coordination Group for the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean, to advance the production of indicators that are relevant to the region in the framework proposed by the Sustainable Development Goals and strengthen the particular national statistical capacities,

9. *Underscore* that realizing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and that the protection and full realization of their human rights are essential to achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development, and in this regard recommend further streamlining a gender approach into national sustainable development policies and strategies,

10. *Emphasize* the importance for countries of the region of official development assistance and climate financing, which is additional to the latter, particularly, to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions and bridge its structural gaps, as well as the importance of South-South cooperation and the potential for it between Latin American and Caribbean countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda,

11. *Recall* that South-South cooperation is an important element of international cooperation for development as a complement, not a substitute, to North-South cooperation, and reaffirm the importance of fully complying with international commitments made in this regard, including the mobilization of financial and non-financial resources and the promotion of the development, transfer, dissemination of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favorable terms, and further recommend to increase regional cooperation, inter alia, on the development of endogenous science and technology,

12. *Recognize* the potential impacts of exponential technological change and automation in our countries and in this regard, recommends the Secretariat of ECLAC to issue a concept note on the matters, with concrete recommendations for the consideration of the Latin American and Caribbean countries at the Ministerial Conference on Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held in Santiago de Chile in August 8 and 9, with a view to initiate a discussion on the matters, including by establishing a task group to further elaborate regional recommendations for ongoing UN processes related to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular the HLPF, ECOSOC and the General Assembly, as appropriate,

13. *Stress* the importance and transformative potential of entrepreneurship and the private sector, and incentivizing changes in financing as well as consumption and production patterns to support sustainable development, and recommend to develop policies and, where appropriate, strengthening regulatory frameworks to better align private sector incentives with public goals, including incentivizing the private sector to adopt sustainable practices and foster long-term quality investment,

14. *Recommend* redoubling efforts to substantially reduce illicit financial flows by 2030, including by combating tax evasion and corruption through strengthened national regulation and increased international cooperation and reducing opportunities for tax avoidance to make sure that all companies, including multinationals, pay taxes to the Governments of countries where economic activity occurs and value is created, and further recall that every State has, and shall freely exercise, full permanent sovereignty over all its wealth, natural resources and economic activity,

15. *Acknowledge* the primary responsibility of Governments in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which takes into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respects national policies and priorities, welcome the numerous contributions and the support provided by the United Nations System and the international organizations and programs with a presence in the region, and reiterate the need to ensure that their activities are carried out in a coherent and coordinated manner and in line with national policies and priorities,

16. *Recall* the participatory and inclusive character of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which encourages the participation of all relevant stakeholders, and in this regard recommend to ensure, as appropriate, an effective and significant participation of civil society organizations, academia and private sector at the upcoming meetings of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, welcome their contributions to its first meeting, and recommend their continuous engagement in implementing the 2030 Agenda in the region,

17. *Reaffirm* that States are strongly urged to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries, and

18. *Take note* with appreciation of ECLAC annual report on regional progress and challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its annex on financing, request the Secretariat to prepare an updated version, and recommend the Presidency of the 36th Session of ECLAC to submit it, along with the present conclusions and recommendations and a Summary of the Chair, as regional contributions to the upcoming High-Level Political Forum and ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development, as well as to the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism, for their due consideration,

19. *Express* our appreciation to ECLAC for the support provided to the region in its efforts to implement 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and urge the Commission to continue to support regional initiatives to leave no one behind,

20. *Value* the format and organization of the first forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, as well as the modalities for the participation of multiple actors, and invite the Chair of the Thirty-sixth session of ECLAC, with the support of the Secretariat, to maintain a constant dialogue with all the member countries of the Forum and the relevant actors to

follow-up the activities that result from the regional follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and

21. *Express* our deepest appreciation to the Government of Mexico for organizing and hosting the first meeting of the Forum of the Latin American and Caribbean Countries.

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Input from the Economic Commission for Africa to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits the input from the Economic Commission for Africa to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

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Please recycle

Key messages of the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

[Original: English and French]

I. Introduction

1. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Environment, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, convened the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, in Addis Ababa from 17 to 19 May 2017, in preparation for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017, to be held in New York from 10 to 19 July 2017.

2. The third session of the Forum was attended by 415 participants, comprising high-level representatives of Governments of all 54 of the ECA member States, intergovernmental bodies, major groups and other stakeholders,[1] United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, and other international organizations.

3. Since 2015, the Africa Regional Forum has been convened on an annual basis in Africa to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063. The Forum promotes coordination and coherence, and the learning and sharing of best practices. It serves as an important mechanism, not only for tracking progress in implementation, but also for keeping all the stakeholders in Africa mobilized and engaged to strengthen their commitment to concerted action, and to garner international support for efforts to translate the Sustainable Development Goals and aspirations of Agenda 2063 into measurable and shared prosperity that benefits the planet and its people.

4. The theme of the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was "Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all". This theme is well aligned with that of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017: "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world."

5. The third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development undertook an in-depth review of the implementation of the cluster of Sustainable Development Goals[2] for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017, under the following corresponding sub-themes:

(a) Eradicating all forms of poverty in Africa;

(b) Ending hunger and achieving food security in Africa;

[1] The term "major groups" refers to the following sectors: groups and associations of women, children and young people; indigenous peoples; non-governmental organizations; local authorities; workers and trade unions; business and industry; scientific and technological community; and farmers.

[2] Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere; Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation; and Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

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(c) Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all;

(d) Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

(e) Building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation;

(f) Conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

6. The review under each sub-theme examined the required enablers and means of implementation.

7. The follow-up and review during the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was preceded and informed by outcomes of the tenth session of the ECA Committee on Sustainable Development; the Africa regional workshop on preparations for the 2017 Voluntary National Reviews at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017; and the preparatory and capacity-development workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in the Africa region.

II. Chair's summary of the key messages

8. The following is the Chair's summary of the agreed key messages on the theme and sub-themes of the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for policy dialogue, policymaking and implementation at the national, regional and global levels, towards the realization of the goals of the 2030 Agenda and those of Agenda 2063. These messages constitute Africa's regional input to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017.

A. Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all and overall success in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063

1. Introduction

9. Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in Africa hinge on fostering inclusive and sustainable growth. The attainment of gender equality and women's empowerment and the consideration of youth in development planning and implementation are critical dimensions of inclusion in the region. Notable evolving factors that must be taken into account to eradicate poverty and promote well-being and prosperity in Africa include population dynamics, the changing climate and resource constraints created by the depletion of natural resources, and environmental degradation, including pollution. Thus, to restructure their economies and achieve sustained growth, African countries have identified the following as some of the priority areas for domestic and foreign investment: transformation of agriculture, resilient infrastructure, industrialization, innovation, and sustainable management of natural assets, including marine resources. These areas correspond to the six Sustainable Development Goals for in-depth review at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017.

2. Key messages

10. Key messages include:

(a) The 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 call for bold, transformational change to build fairer, more inclusive, healthier, more prosperous and more resilient societies

that use natural resources sustainably and create opportunity for all. Both The Agendas see development as a process that requires holistic approaches, which, in turn, balance and integrate the economic, social and environmental pillars of development;

(b) The integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 calls for inclusive and integrated approaches to their implementation and for reporting that builds on existing mechanisms and integrates the reviews of the outcomes of the major conferences of the United Nations and the African Union, as key contributions to the realization of sustainable development. Thus, it is important to support the countries in mapping the two Agendas and to ensure their convergence with the national development plans at every stage of the planning cycle;

(c) To implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, it is important for the Governments of Africa to design measures that expand domestic resource mobilization, through areas such as: improving tax administration; broadening the tax base and eliminating loopholes for tax avoidance, especially among the rich; prioritizing expenditures with the biggest impact on the less privileged; monitoring the reach of public spending to intended purposes; and fighting illicit financial flows by, among other things, building tax audit capacity and strengthening cooperation on tax matters to contribute to the domestic resource mobilization efforts of developing countries. Concessional external financing, official development assistance, and capacity-building should also assist African countries in this important aspect;

(d) Voluntary national reviews are at the forefront in demonstrating and catalysing progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals on account of the emerging good practices and lessons learned in domesticating and implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. More countries are encouraged — and should be supported — to undertake and widely disseminate the outcomes of their Voluntary National Reviews. Countries are also encouraged to strengthen national frameworks for follow-up and review to allow adequate inputs to Voluntary National Reviews from major groups and other stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society;

(e) For timely policy decisions and adequate comparison within and between countries, the national statistics offices across the continent require international assistance to build stronger capacity for gathering and analysing disaggregated data on a broad range of issues relevant to sustainable development. The national statistical offices, supported by development partners, therefore need to strengthen their statistics development systems and data gathering and management plans to support the monitoring and reporting requirements of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in a harmonized and integrated manner;

(f) African Governments and other stakeholders recognize the importance of the data revolution for accelerating the continent's sustainable development. This is embodied in the Africa Data Consensus and in the African Charter on Statistics. In order for Africa to harness the full transformative power of the data revolution, significant investment will need to made in the following areas: human resources; technological capabilities; platforms and tools; and in establishing effective governance frameworks related to the production, processing, protection, ownership, quality, openness, timeliness, relevance, accessibility, harmonization, inter-operability and use of different types of data, regardless of who produces or owns them. Development partners are also called upon to support the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, in building the capacity of national statistics offices in Africa;

(g) Successful implementation of both Agendas requires an effective institutional architecture for an integrated and coordinated approach and

multi-stakeholder engagement in problem-solving, policymaking, and planning and implementation. Strong and capable national and subnational planning agencies are paramount in ensuring that the various sectors work together to ensure that the three dimensions of sustainable development are reflected in all aspects of development programming. Long-term planning and policy coordination, and ongoing progress monitoring, as well as impact evaluation, are needed to identify what works, and to address policy failures and gaps. In the context of leaving no one behind and pursuing inclusive growth and prosperity for all, Governments need to strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement — including private sector and civil society — in design and implementation plans and monitoring of progress towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

B. Eradicating all forms of poverty in Africa

11. Key messages include:

(a) Economic growth is a necessary condition for poverty reduction in Africa, but growth alone is not sufficient. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and ending poverty in Africa will require accelerated and inclusive structural transformation through economic diversification and accelerated industrialization;

(b) For Africa to harness the demographic dividend, growth needs to be sustainably high to create sufficient decent jobs and absorb the growing working-age population. It needs to be inclusive, to expand choices and create livelihood opportunities for all, especially women and young people, and to achieve substantial and broad-based improvements in human well-being. Moreover, investments in inclusive, high-quality education and skills development must be increased. Investments in peace and security and effective and responsive institutions are critical to harnessing the demographic dividend and for attaining sustainable development;

(c) Social protection programmes should be expanded and appropriate schemes should target the poor and most vulnerable, including indigenous populations, the ageing population, children, women, young people, and persons with disabilities; in addition, appropriate skills should be nurtured through high-quality education. Technical and vocational training and entrepreneurial development can further reduce poverty in Africa. The African Union Ouagadougou+10 process on employment, poverty eradication and inclusive development identifies social protection as one of its six priority areas, which is also reflected in the African Union's First Five-Year Priority Programme on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development (2015-2019);

(d) Africa should expand domestic resource mobilization through increased economic growth for broader and progressive taxation, to allow increased public investment on employment promotion and social protection, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, adopted in 2015. In addition, Africa should strengthen partnerships within the framework of South-South cooperation to leverage resources for financing;

(e) Investing in the capacities of people, communities, economies, cities and countries to prevent, reduce and manage risks arising from climate change and natural hazards, conflict, economic, political and social instabilities, is critical to building resilience and achieving broad-based sustainable development;

(f) Addressing calls to eradicate poverty by harnessing the potential of women, who form half of the population, to ensure that they enjoy full human rights and have access to opportunities through deliberate gender policies that address the structural causes of poverty and eradicate the increasing burden of poverty on

women and expand women's access to economic opportunities and resources. It also calls for addressing social and cultural practices that impede Africa's progress towards the goal of gender equality;

(g) Formulating and implementing policies that address poverty requires an understanding of the different and multiple dimensions of poverty and inequality, which goes beyond income. This includes rural, urban, age, disability and gender-based intersectionalities of inequality towards eradicating poverty;

(h) Weak data systems and data gaps in some member States pose serious challenges for effective monitoring and evaluation of progress in eradicating poverty. In particular, weak disaggregation of indicators, whether by gender or location, poses further challenges for data collection and analysis. In this context, target 17.18 of the Sustainable Development Goals is critical: to "leave no one behind" and to "reach the furthest behind first". This target promotes monitoring of disaggregated data by "income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts";

(i) The means of implementation, including financial assistance through continued Official Development Assistance (ODA) remains vital to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 1 by 2030. Developed countries must honour their historic obligations and responsibilities, as part of the commitments made in the context of the Global Partnership for Development, which itself also needs to be expanded and strengthened, also in the context of the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR);

(j) It is important to reinforce the existing modalities and programmes for international assistance of groups of countries in special situations in Africa. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development must devote adequate time to addressing poverty eradication and sustainable development challenges facing African countries, in particular, those that are the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island developing States;

(k) An area of importance in eradicating poverty in Africa is to effectively address illicit financial flows and the negative consequences that flow from it. Multinational corporations and other such entities should make their rightful contributions in the countries where their revenues are generated to assist African Governments in their poverty eradication programmes and to reduce risk;

(l) It is important that African countries and civil society organizations receive the necessary international support, including through appropriate partnerships, to ensure that no one is left behind and to achieve eradication of poverty, sustainable development and stronger resilience, especially for those in extreme poverty (people living on less than $1.25 per day), vulnerable groups, young people, women, persons with disabilities, and older people. Such support is also important in the context of a rights-based approach.

C. Ending hunger and achieving food security in Africa

1. Introduction

12. Fighting hunger in Africa is a national and regional security issue and needs to be dealt with as a matter of gravest urgency. Africa should employ "all necessary measures" as it would in a state of emergency.

13. Africa's food security and nutrition situation are worsening in absolute terms. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reports that the number of undernourished people increased by 30 per cent between 1990 and 2016.

The situation is particularly severe in the Sahel and Horn of Africa regions, where up to 23 million people in 11 countries have been affected by recurrent drought and floods, severely endangering food security and nutrition. The food insecurity situation is aggravated by the continuing conflicts in some countries and unfavourable weather conditions, including droughts and flooding, in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa. These challenges must be addressed as part of an overall continental strategy for agricultural and rural transformation.

14. Agricultural and rural transformation is critical not only for ending hunger and achieving food security in Africa, but also for addressing many other pressing issues in Africa, including employment, industrialization, empowerment of women, ending protracted crises and conflict, and building resilience to climate change. However, African agriculture faces daunting challenges, including low productivity, environmental and soil degradation, climate variability, loss of biodiversity and, of particular significance, chronic underinvestment.

15. Integrating climate-resilient agroecological adaptation approaches for on-farm production with clean energy for value addition represents an opportunity to maximize productivity and render climate-proof African food and agriculture systems.

2. Key messages

16. Key messages include:

(a) The interplay between low productivity, low incomes, and stagnant and degraded agricultural production systems in Africa has resulted in entrenched hunger — an almost intractable problem that weighs massively on Africa's development and consigns millions of Africans to lives of misery. As a result, the problem of global food insecurity has become, in large degree, an African phenomenon. Yet the means to address this profound challenge are mostly to be found within Africa itself. The key is to address the three elements — productivity, purchasing power and production — through a comprehensive, integrated approach to tackling food insecurity;

(b) It is critical that all actors — farmers, agrifood businesses, private sector, civil society and other stakeholders — assume their respective roles and responsibilities. Small farmers themselves must be empowered as the critical agents of change. Policy priority must go to ensuring their access to the required productive resources, to a supportive enabling environment, and to appropriate institutions. Integrated multisectoral and multidisciplinary approaches led by Governments at the national level are crucial to tackling the complex root causes of conflict and food and nutrition insecurity;

(c) These root causes include, among other things: degradation of land and water resources, low or declining agricultural productivity and incomes, exposure to recurrent drought and floods, and political instability resulting from uncertainty over access to land and water resources. Using new tools, such as shock-resistant social protection, Governments have powerful, proven means to encourage local development and promote new and innovative agricultural practices that provide more consistent yields, improve sustainability, conserve water and soils, maintain or increase biodiversity, or improve resilience to droughts and floods;

(d) Tracking and reporting progress — to support mutual learning and accountability — is essential for sustained effective action. Governments, with support from development partners, need to establish or strengthen comprehensive, integrated, and cost-effective monitoring and reporting systems to follow up the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to provide the evidence base to inform coherent and integrated policymaking;

(e) In the context of Africa's rapidly growing urbanization, achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2, as well as a number of related goals, necessitates the promotion of rural transformation and improvement of urban-rural linkages. This could be attained through targeted investments in infrastructure, in food systems capable of delivering safe, sustainable and nutritious food to urban markets, and in expanding economic opportunity for rural and peri-urban populations along the supply chain. One key prerequisite is to improve productive capacities by ensuring that rural people, especially women and young people, have adequate, affordable access to key productive assets such as land, and to education, technology, infrastructure and financial services;

(f) Rapid, sustained economic growth and increased agricultural productivity, though quite modest, over the past decade and more, have helped the proportion of undernourished people drop by almost half. Many African countries that used to suffer from famine and hunger can now meet the nutritional needs of the most vulnerable. In general, a significant number of African countries have made huge progress in eradicating extreme hunger. However, hunger and malnutrition have continued to constitute a huge barrier to development in most African countries. About 330 million people, or almost one in every four Africans, are estimated to be chronically undernourished, and about one in four children under the age of five years is stunted;

(g) Effective continental leadership and ownership of the transformation agenda is essential for effective implementation, delivery and accountability for results. Strong political commitment to end hunger and promote food security, must be driven by frameworks such as the African Union/New Partnership for Africa's Development Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development (CAADP) Programme. All regional institutions, programmes and policies must be harmonized and aligned with the achievement of the Malabo Declaration. All international partners are requested to align with this clear priority of the continent. South-South cooperation has been a particularly effective means of advancing policies and programmes towards ending hunger and should be further strengthened;

(h) Conflicts and civil insecurity continue to pose daunting challenges in respect of food security in Africa. The correlation between the exposure of communities to conflict and civil insecurity, and the deterioration of their food security and nutrition situation is well documented. In context, the three pre-famine conditions currently reported in Africa are all linked to the impact of protracted conflict, which mainly affects rural communities where agriculture is the mainstay of the local economy. There is now greater recognition among African Governments of the importance of ensuring peace and stability, the lack of which has been both the cause and consequence of conflicts that risk thwarting efforts to fight food insecurity in many African countries;

(i) While most African countries have embarked on programmes and projects that aim at enhancing incomes of small-scale farmers through input subsidies and other measures intended to increase agricultural production, there is not yet substantial evidence of improvement in the agricultural productivity of small-scale farmers. Most small-scale farmers in Africa grow food, but their productivity is so low that they have little surplus for market and are themselves quite poor, hungry and food-insecure. African countries need to harness the potential for improving yields and, thereby, incomes for small-scale farmers;

(j) Despite the commitments for targeted investments in agriculture under the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), and an important increase in the share of total government expenditure on agriculture since 2011, the sector remains sharply

underinvested. Because of the general decline in overall national expenditure, the absolute amount of investment has continued to decline. Increased investments in agriculture are therefore needed to contain extreme hunger and feed into processing industries and export trade. Increased investments in research and development for climate-resistant breeds and appropriate technology — for example, irrigation and the development of value chains, as well as other proactive measures, such as investor-friendly policies and regulations — are all required to expand both agricultural output and productivity;

(k) Frequent droughts and floods, changed precipitation patterns and extreme weather conditions are currently the norm rather than the exception in many parts of Africa, especially in the Horn of Africa, Sahel and Southern Africa. Such weather conditions continue to pose serious challenges to food security and nutrition. Thus food security cannot be achieved without climate-proofing Africa's food systems and enhancing productivity of the ecosystems that underpin production in the first place. There is, therefore, an imperative for progress in climate resilience building, including early warning systems.

D. Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all

1. Introduction

17. Health and well-being are cornerstones for productive lives free of poverty. Many countries in Africa have already stepped up their efforts to achieve universal and equitable access to high-quality health care for all (people with disabilities, children, young people, senior populations, rural populations, and vulnerable groups), including health promotion and universal access to comprehensive reproductive health services, voluntary family planning, to ensure the realization of reproductive rights, and to improve health systems and health financing, among other imperatives. However, progress between and within subregions and individual countries remains varied, and major challenges abound. For instance, at 25 per cent, Africa excluding North Africa has the world's highest unmet need for family planning. This has an impact on progress in related areas of health for women, children and for the ageing population. Except for North Africa, Africa remains the epicentre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, although deaths due to HIV/AIDS have declined by almost half in the last 10 years, owing to programmes on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission and strong anti-retroviral treatment in member States. Nonetheless, the prevalence rate, estimated at 4.8 per cent in 2014 in the region, remains disturbingly high. Africa also continues to bear the brunt of the global burden of tuberculosis, and accounts for 28 per cent of the estimated 9.6 million cases that occurred worldwide in 2014. It is also noteworthy that, while communicable diseases remain a major threat, non-communicable diseases are on the upswing because of changing lifestyles and ageing, especially in urban areas. In addition, neglected tropical diseases, rare diseases, genetic disorders and mental health issues continue to pose challenges for Africa.

2. Key messages

18. Key messages include:

(a) Health is slowly moving from the margins of policy debates to a central position in development planning in Africa. This is evident from the increased attention being given to health issues through a number of policy frameworks and instruments. In order to promote healthy lives and ensure universal access to health services, including for SRH, and deliver health care to all, however, it is necessary to avoid fragmentation in funding and interventions, to strengthen health-care systems

and primary health care, to ensure effective multisectoral responses, provide adequate financing as well as to address the problem of unequal access to effective services;

(b) Member States are on average still far from meeting key health-care financing goals. Among such goals is that set in the Abuja Declarations and the Frameworks of 2000/2001 for Action on Roll Back Malaria, and on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases, of allocating 15 per cent of national budgets to health; in addition, non-communicable diseases such as fistula and cancer. The failure to attain set financing targets, among other factors, has meant that Africa's investment in the health sector remains lower than that of other regions. Sustained investments in accessible health care, coupled with appropriate reforms, are needed in order to have in place resilient systems that can respond effectively to the health needs of African people. Furthermore, there is a need to strengthen health care, including by building climate resilient health systems;

(c) Government spending on health is far below recommended levels, and an overreliance on out-of-pocket pushes many into poverty or deters their use of essential health services. Many low-income countries are almost reliant on donor funds, which are usually restricted to project funding. The situation adds to reporting and management complexities. Governments are called on to ensure fair and mandatory public financing to build universal and equitable health coverage;

(d) Weak data systems and data gaps in some member States in the areas of demography and certain health indicators, in particular, the very limited disaggregation of indicators, pose serious challenges for the effective monitoring and evaluation of progress and control of diseases. Enhancing the availability of disaggregated data and empirical evidence in the health-related Sustainable Development Goals is of critical importance. In this context, strong and robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks should be put in place and supported by credible data to inform analysis and the design and implementation of policy. Countries need to strengthen the capacity of their national statistical systems to monitor progress towards the health-related indicators of the Goals;

(e) Redistributive fiscal policies allowing for social protection systems that target the poor, marginalized and vulnerable are indispensable in addressing health inequities and inequitable conditions among people. Countries should, therefore, be supported in designing and implementing such fiscal policies, including ensuring that the private or the joint sector (which funds large capital development projects) plans for and sets aside a dedicated budget in their environment protection plans to address health challenges that are faced by both the resident locals and the migrant workforce where, for example, mining or major works are taking place, such as the construction of roads and bridges;

(f) Domestic resource mobilization is critical for sustainable health outcomes in Africa. Africa should expand the domestic fiscal space through increased economic growth for broader and progressive taxation, which will allow more public revenues to be spent on health. In addition, it should strengthen partnerships within the framework of South-South cooperation to leverage resources for health financing. In parallel, African countries will need to ensure access to continuing health funding, such as through the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria, in particular for service delivery in situations where local capacities do not meet threshold requirements, and strengthen existing partnerships;

(g) Africa has adopted regional frameworks and initiatives that demonstrate political will and commitment, and which should be pursued to realize the region's vision of harnessing its demographic dividend to achieve the health-related goals and targets, and sustainable development. The following are among those regional strategic frameworks and agreements that should be fully supported and

implemented: the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention; the Africa Health Strategy 2016-2030; the Abuja Declarations and Frameworks of 2000/2001 For Action on Roll Back Malaria, HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and other Related Infectious Diseases on increasing government funding for health; the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration on Primary Health Care and Health Systems in Africa; the Addis Ababa Declaration of 2006 on Community Health in the African Region; the 2012 Tunis Declaration on Value for Money, Sustainability and Accountability in the Health Sector; the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa Beyond 2014 and its operational guide; the 2016-2030 Maputo Plan of Action for the Operationalization of the Continental Policy Framework for SRH; and the 2016 Africa disability protocol adopted in Banjul;

(h) In the context of health and development, it is imperative that Africa achieves its goals to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities. At the same time, it must respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all people, especially those living with HIV, vulnerable and marginalized populations; it must also eliminate all barriers that hamper women's rights to affordable and high-quality SRH services, and promote gender equality and rights. Global health and HIV-related strategies, for example, the 2016-2021 Strategy On the Fast Track to End AIDS of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the 2017-2022 Strategy of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria Investing to the End the Epidemics, and the Strategy of the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief PEPFAR 3.0 — Controlling the Epidemic: Delivering on the Promise of an AIDS-free Generation, note the centrality of human rights and investing in human rights programmes in the context of HIV and AIDS. There is also a growing recognition of the need for a rights-based response to tuberculosis, all forms of mental health and genetic disorders. In addition, Africa should address the root causes of chronic and emerging diseases arising from environmental causes including air and water pollution;

(i) There is a need for the States of Africa to collaborate and for international assistance in respect of health innovation, including drug and health technology development and assessment, in order to improve access to essential, good quality and affordable medicines, eradicate rampant and emerging diseases and expand life expectancies of populations.

E. Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

1. Introduction

19. Pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls should lie at the heart of efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, if poverty eradication and inclusive and sustainable development are to be realized. Progress has been made in girls' enrolment in primary education, and in women's representation in national parliaments and local governments. Yet, challenges abound in terms of the quality of education and enrolment beyond primary education; women's effective participation in leadership and decision-making positions at all levels; high maternal mortality rates, and prevalence of violence against women and harmful practices as well as the promotion of social norms justifying such violence. Despite major shifts in labour markets across the world, African labour markets are stable in terms of status and sector of female employment whereby women predominantly work as contributing family workers in agriculture sector without pay. If the gap in women's education and skills is not addressed and if the burden follows from unpaid care, work is not recognized and

redistributed, progress in women's economic empowerment cannot take place and positive externalities to other Sustainable Development Goals will not extend.

2. Key messages

20. Key messages include:

(a) Growth that overlooks or worsens gender inequality cannot be inclusive or sustainable. Appropriate measures and stronger action must be taken to reflect issues relating to gender and to women, including those relevant to girls and young women, in the national integrated plans that countries are developing to incorporate the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 into their domestic legal frameworks, and also in regional strategies and plans to harness the demographic and gender dividend. The ministries responsible for national integrated planning for the implementation of both agendas should promote multisectoral coordination and strengthen the positioning, funding and technical capacities as well as ensure the full and effective participation of the ministries in charge of gender equality and women's empowerment, and of women's movements and gender experts to ensure that gender issues are taken on board and member States' accountability is increased;

(b) Generation of statistics relating to gender should be a key component of gender equality and sustainable development efforts in Africa. Countries, in collaboration with the international community, should support the Africa Data Revolution to facilitate a systematic integration and appropriate funding of gender dimensions into national statistics systems in support of policymaking and tracking of progress on gender equality. The collection, interpretation and analysis of valuable gender relevant data should ensure the engagement of various stakeholders, including women's rights organizations;

(c) A number of African countries have formulated policies and enacted laws to secure and protect the rights of women and girls, although some countries still have laws that discriminate against women in the private and public spheres. The challenge is therefore to ensure that all countries in the region undertake necessary legislative reform to protect the rights of women and girls, and address the current weak implementation and enforcement of already existing frameworks, including CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women, Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and Addis Ababa Declaration of Population and Development beyond 2014. Innovative policies are desperately needed to engage men and boys as champions and enablers of gender equality and women's empowerment, especially in addressing social norms and stereotypes through the engagement of cultural and faith-based leaders. Key to the strengthened implementation of the frameworks is accompanying them by appropriate resources and strengthened monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;

(d) African countries' commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment should go along with the harnessing of domestic resources — both financial and human — to implement fully and urgently the gender goals, in order to steer the development discourse in the right direction, and to maximize the potential and outcomes of women's social, economic and political empowerment. Sufficient financial and human resources should be allocated for the implementation of the gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment goals, which will inevitably accelerate the achievement of all other goals under the Agendas. Instituting gender-responsive budgeting is among the first policy tools, along with implementing gender-responsive macroeconomic policies to ensure economic justice for women. Addressing regressive tax systems, along with illicit financial flows, should elevate domestic resources that member States can mobilize to tackle challenges;

(e) Violence against women and girls under various guises constitutes the most pervasive form of violation of women's and girls' basic human rights. A critical barrier to the elimination of such violence, which should be urgently addressed, is the lack of laws that criminalize it or, where such laws exist, failure to enforce them effectively. Legal frameworks on domestic violence should be complemented by community-level engagement and the safety of women rights' defenders must be ensured;

(f) African countries have made commendable progress towards ensuring women's participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, including in peace, conflict and humanitarian settings. Concern, however, remains for the extent to which women fully and effectively participate in leadership and decision-making at national and local levels. Other areas include women's absence in managerial positions in the formal private sector, women's underrepresentation in the judiciary and, finally, the experience across the continent of the shrinking space that women rights organizations are allotted;

(g) Special attention should be given to women's economic empowerment by harnessing their entrepreneurial talent and opportunities, and guaranteeing full enjoyment of productive employment and decent work for all women, especially those in vulnerable situations. As a precursor to this, ensuring access at all levels to high-quality education and skills with revised curricula that no longer contribute to the promotion of undesirable gender norms for women and adolescent girls. In this context, women and girls, particularly in rural areas, should be fully involved in and benefit from strategies and initiatives to transform and diversify the continent's economies, which requires tackling the burden of women's unpaid care work, ensuring equal pay for equal work and access to and ownership of land, and access to other productive assets and financial services;

(h) There are alarming rates of maternal mortality and an unmet need for voluntary family planning, in particular among younger women. Greater investment in women's sexual and reproductive health (SRH) should be prioritized in development planning and financing at all levels. In this, it is critical for African countries and the international community to reaffirm the promise and fulfil the rights of women and girls, and guarantee their universal access to such health and family planning services, and to increase investment in this area. It is crucial to invest in the well-being of adolescent girls, given the size of this population group. It is critical to protect them from situations and conditions that occur, in global terms, at the highest rate in Africa, including female genital mutilation, early marriage, and adolescent pregnancy. Addressing these are crucial to fulfilling their rights, keeping girls in school, and ensuring the gender dividend as well as a demographic dividend that is needed to drive inclusive economic growth and prosperity for all in Africa.

F. Building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation

1. Introduction

21. Infrastructure, industrialization and innovation are among Africa's top priorities that are recognized as central to higher economic growth and poverty eradication. Progress in the goals under this sub-theme is vital to African countries' efforts to bridge the infrastructure gap, including the development of modern, clean and low-carbon energy, and to harness the transformative and job-creating potential

of industrialization and innovation for shared green growth and prosperity; and for the realization of the two Agendas.

22. Commodities export-based growth has not served Africa well and has contributed to inequality and increased unemployment. Green industrialization, focused on transforming Africa's natural resources and powered by the continent's clean energy resources, provides an opportunity for Africa to leapfrog and plug competitively in global value chains, thereby creating inclusive job opportunities. Infrastructure and trade are key enablers for green industrialization. Africa can take a late-comer advantage of advances in innovation, falling costs of low-carbon technologies, and the need to diversify and strengthen the macroeconomic basis of economies.

23. African countries should diversify and move away from traditional trade patterns, which are marked by an excessive reliance on exports of raw materials and semi-processed goods and on traditional comparative advantages of raw materials and unskilled labour.

2. Key messages

24. Key messages include:

(a) Inclusive and sustainable industrial development is a significant source of income, which allows for rapid and sustained increases in living standards for all people, including women and young people. Without green industrialization, a sustainable path of economic development will not be achieved. Industry (including agroindustry) provides a breeding ground for entrepreneurship, fosters technological dynamism and productivity growth, creates skilled jobs and, through intersectoral linkages, establishes the foundation for the expansion of both agriculture and services — leaving no one behind. Within the process of globalization, the interconnection and interdependence between industrial development and trade are increasing. Global and regional value chains, linking the entire sequence of activities from raw material extraction, production, design, and research and development, to marketing, delivery and disposal after use, opens up new avenues for domestic industrial capacity-building, transfer and co-development of clean technologies and the structural transformation of developing countries;

(b) It is important to focus on poor households and communities, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and industries, and to help them link up with the global economy, agroindustries and rural industrialization, and regional industrial development. Effective and inclusive participation in the regional and global value chain can play an important role in poverty eradication efforts. SMEs account for the majority of registered enterprises in Africa and for a large share of new jobs created over the last decade, including for young people. This share is even higher in the "informal economy". However, SMEs have difficulty with access and affordability of capital and technical skills and, as a result, face difficulties scaling up. In order to better support SMEs, it is important for financial institutions to develop knowledge and expertise in the sectors where SMEs are active. International support should be engaged to complement national efforts. Support directed to the development of SMEs should aim to develop capacities through experience and facilitate them to grow and transition out of the informal economy, as well as to increase fiscal revenue;

(c) The high transaction costs related to unreliable and expensive power supply and telecommunications, and poor transport infrastructure arising from non-regionalization of critical infrastructure, have undermined the development of competitive and productive capacities of African economies, contributing to the marginalization of the region in world trade, finance and investment. They have also contributed to a poor supply response to structural adjustment policies and the

failure to diversify. Investment in, rehabilitating, modernizing, greening and expanding Africa's transport, telecommunications, water and energy infrastructure should be prioritized. Because of its capital-intensive nature, adequate efforts will be possible only by joining forces with the private sector, international and emerging partners. Leading countries on the continent should act as regional hubs for technology transfer;

(d) The development of national education and training systems and programmes is crucial as a means to address the capacity gaps in terms of design and implementation of projects and resilient infrastructure. Capacity development should span both technical and financial competencies, including the ability to address taxation and illicit financial flows. All actors need to be brought together, not only by the government and private sectors, but also by education and training providers, including through vocational and technical education. Regional experience sharing should be used to address capacity gaps;

(e) Innovation offers unique opportunities to "late-developer" countries to leapfrog: they can seize opportunities not only in emerging but also in mature industries. Late developers are not locked in, and can benefit from entering mature industries without having to bear the research and development costs. As other world regions, Africa has particularly benefited from innovations enabled by information and communication technologies — better take-up and use is imperative. Investment in research and development should be considerably increased, and attention should be given to the development of climate information and services, resilient infrastructure and green industrialization capacities. In addition to facilitating technology transfer, there is a need for a regional approach to collaborative research and development as a key mechanism for nurturing local innovation. Research partnerships must be established between universities, private firms, civil society organizations and Governments. Supporting grassroot innovation and innovative partnerships, including South-South, should be explored;

(f) The challenges in financing can be addressed by shifting the perception from a focus on financing gaps to investment and research and development opportunities, bearing in mind previous global commitments on the financing of resilient and green infrastructure. Clear, simple and stable regulation is needed for private sector investment. Governments should look to channels of domestic resource mobilization, including ending illicit financial flows. Affordable and sustainable support from international and South-South partners should complement national efforts. Furthermore, Governments could be supported by high-level "business units" comprised of finance experts in charge of developing public-private partnerships, to attract finance from financial markets, remittances and other innovative mechanisms, for example;

(g) All governments, including regional and local authorities, should promote inclusive, ecologically-sound industrialization and the provision of a modern and well-maintained infrastructure that incorporates the protection of nature, especially investing in renewable energy and solar energy infrastructure and participatory decision-making.

G. Conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

1. Introduction

25. Africa has vast ocean, sea and marine resources that are fundamental to the realization of sustainable development in the region. Freshwater and ocean fish

make a vital contribution to the food and nutritional security of more than 200 million Africans, and provide income for more than 10 million. The sustainable management of marine resources is pivotal to poverty eradication, given that most of the poor rely on natural resources for their livelihood and poverty reduction strategies. The potential of marine resources to eradicate poverty and to foster sustainable development in the region, however, is undermined by multiple challenges that undercut livelihood opportunities, resulting in major economic losses and degradation of the very resources upon which the continent depends. Such challenges include overfishing and illegal fishing, and fishing that is unreported and unregulated, which contributes to illicit financial flows. Other obstacles include pollution (both land and sea), unsustainable tourism, coastal erosion and flooding. Many of these factors are further aggravated by climate change. Achieving human rights, gender equality, and sustainable development for the majority of people is tied to sustainable use and management of oceans and marine resources. Ensuring the health of oceans is as important as ensuring the lives of the population that depend on the oceans for their livelihood and survival.

2. Key messages

26. Key messages include:

(a) Achieving long-term sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Africa will depend on the sustainable and optimal management of its natural capital, including oceans, seas and marine resources. This notwithstanding, African coasts and marine space are facing a cycle of declining ecosystem health and productivity. This is brought on by an increased demand in living and non-living resources, the development of new technologies, the decline in fish stocks, climate change, biodiversity and habitat loss, as well as weak ocean governance. The ocean-based and marine-based natural capital should therefore be harnessed through sound social, environmental and economic policy regimes. It is also crucial to eliminate, reverse and recoup illicit financial activities in order to enhance the flow of marine resources-based economic and social benefits and increased investments for sustainable development of ocean and sea resources. The rise in sea level makes it critical to protect the marine coast, fresh water and the ecosystem along the shores. This extends to creating and protecting marine areas, such as mangroves, to strengthen the linkages between oceans and seas, which are critical to the health of oceans;

(b) Effective governance and integrated approaches to the management of Africa's ocean and marine resources are crucial to the achievement of targets under Sustainable Development Goal 14 as it links to other goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Currently, however, Africa's rich marine and coastal resources are managed within what is perceived to be weak ocean governance framework and sectoral approaches. An emerging and promising comprehensive initiative is the application of ecosystem approaches in the management of the economic exclusion zones and high seas. Such approaches should include effective management tools that are culturally and socially acceptable, and economically feasible, in particular co-management approaches using local and coastal communities. Blue economy policies, strategies and legal frameworks at national and regional levels should be implemented;

(c) Transboundary approaches to management of shared marine resources are needed to enhance national and regional efforts to face challenges in the marine and coastal environment, as well as implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. As the world transitions to an inclusive green/blue economy and looks towards oceans and blue natural capital for the realization of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, countries will continue to rely on the "shared seas" approach to restore the

health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, and to maintain their biodiversity, as envisaged under the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) Successful and timely implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions is critical to address and harness, respectively, the opportunities arising from climate change to the sustainable development and management of oceans, seas and marine resources. Blue carbon should be integrated into global climate action activities in recognition of oceans and associate coastal ecosystems as important sinks in order to leverage finance for the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions;

(e) Strengthening the capacity of coastal African countries, in particular that of the least developed countries, islands and small island developing States, especially in the context of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, is crucial for sustainable, managed and enhanced social, economic and environmental benefits from oceans, seas and marine resources. Investments are needed to enhance knowledge capacity of least developed countries and small island developing States in ocean and marine science on the interaction between oceans, and climate impacts on marine and ocean resources, and to strengthen the marine observation capacity;

(f) Implementation of an ecosystem-based approach for sustainable management and the protection of Africa seas and oceans requires enhanced regional and subregional cooperation. These approaches should take into consideration the history, culture and common interest of the region. A number of transboundary or local-cumulative problems — such as marine pollution, unplanned urbanization in coastal cities and urban poverty, overfishing, climate change, impacts from oil and gas exploration, illegal trade in flora and fauna — though with global impacts, can be readily addressed at the regional or subregional levels. Regional approaches such as the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy) should be supported and fully implemented. This will allow identification and implementation to scale best practices and regional approaches to maintain and restore the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, and will support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(g) Regional and international cooperation is critical in order to combat piracy, all forms of marine pollution, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and strengthen maritime safety and security against illegal transportation and trade in protected and endangered species, as well as human trafficking. Countries should cooperate in sharing information, including commercial or other intelligence. Joint naval patrols and cooperation in enacting piracy laws and prosecution could also go a long way towards keeping pirates at bay;

(h) Urgent and enforceable action must be taken by the international community to prohibit, phase out and eliminate harmful fishery subsidies that threaten African fish stock and species, as well as other barriers that affect Africa's participation in international fish trade;

(i) Given the interactions between inland waters and oceans, the integrated management of aquatic ecosystems in general is necessary to ensure the sustainable management of marine resources.

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Input from the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits the input from the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

Please recycle

Report of the Arab High-level political forum on sustainable development

[Original: Arabic]

Introduction

1. In cooperation with the League of Arab States (LAS), United Nations organizations working in the Arab region and the Ministry Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of General Affairs and Governance of the Kingdom of Morocco, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) convened the 2017 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development from 3 to 5 May 2017, in Rabat. The theme of the Forum was "Advancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Arab region", chosen to coincide with the subject of the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held in New York from 10 to 19 July 2017 and entitled, "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", at which the outputs of the Arab Forum and other regional forums will be presented. The 2017 Arab Forum was chaired by the Kingdom of Morocco and proceedings were opened by the Moroccan Prime Minister, Dr. Saadeddine Othmani.

2. The Forum is a high-level regional platform for review and follow-up of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region (hereafter referred to as the 2030 Agenda). Following on from the success of the three previous sessions, held in Amman in 2014 and 2016 and Manama in 2015, the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted at the 29th Ministerial Session of ESCWA (Doha, 13-15 December 2016), affirmed the Forum's role as an annual gathering that brings together Arab governments and sustainable development bodies to review national and regional experience and study the mechanics of implementing the 2030 Agenda at national and regional levels.[1] The outputs of the Arab Forum will be submitted to the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in New York in July every year.

3. This year's Forum coincided with the start of the second year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, during which more Arab States have begun to adapt their plans and strategies, establish the necessary institutional structures to support implementation of the Agenda at national level, and design follow-up and review mechanisms at national and regional levels.

4. The significance of the Arab Forum is to be found in its participatory character. It brings high-level representatives from ministries and bodies responsible for planning and following up implementation of the 2030 Agenda together with representatives from Arab parliaments, a wide range of regional and international organizations, civil society networks and organizations, the private sector, think tanks etc.

5. The programme of the 2017 Forum included plenary sessions focusing on the key theme of "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Arab

[1] The Forum draws its terms of reference from a series of resolutions adopted by ESCWA, including resolution 327 (XXIX) on the working mechanisms of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, adopted at the 29th session; resolution 314 (XXVIII) on the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, adopted at the 28th session (Tunis, 15-18 September 2014); and resolution 322 on supporting Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda, adopted at the second meeting of the Executive Committee of ESCWA (Amman, 14-16 December 2015).

region", national experience of implementing the 2030 Agenda and means of implementation at regional level. It also included special sessions focusing on Arab region priorities, such as gender equality, the environment, population, food security, health and poverty, and incorporation of the Agenda in development planning.

6. The discussions produced key messages from the perspective of the Arab region for submission to the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in New York and for presentation to the third meeting of the Executive Committee of ESCWA, the 30th Ministerial Session of ESCWA and other related forums that may be held at a later date, including Arab Sustainable Development Week.

I. Key messages to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

a. General messages

- The 2016 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development adopted its key messages for submission to the 2016 high-level political forum on sustainable development. It renewed its commitment to the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the guidelines formulated at general and sector-based regional forums linked to the Agenda and consistent with the principles and substance thereof;
- Security, peace, an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and the Palestinian people's enjoyment of its legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination, are essential conditions for achieving development, eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in the Arab region;
- Eradicating poverty and achieving justice and good governance are priorities in and of themselves and preconditions for sustainability and stability;
- The regional dimension has an important part to play in driving the 2030 Agenda in the Arab countries, and the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development has a fundamental role in stimulating action at regional and national levels, communicating the achievements and concerns of the region at global level and influencing the course of the global agenda;
- Practical solutions should be created to address those issues that previous Arab forums to have deemed to be regional in nature. Those solutions should be based on a clear programme of action taking into account the capacities of States and available resources, with particular focus on empowering women and ensuring their effective participation in development and decision-making at all levels;
- There is a need to give effect to the principle of participation at all levels and adopt mechanisms to ensure that all stakeholders and governmental and non-governmental actors in implementing and following up the 2030 Agenda.

b. National experience and national voluntary reviews

National experience in implementing the 2030 Agenda

- The 2030 Agenda does not constitute an additional burden on States. Rather, it is a framework that complements and coordinates their efforts to address national priorities and achieve common goals;

- It is important to affirm national leadership and ownership in adapting the 2030 Agenda in line with national specificities and priorities in partnership with all stakeholders;

- The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development provides a valuable opportunity each year to discuss the experience of Arab States in terms of institutional frameworks, policy, technical mechanisms and constitutional and legal measures designed to institutionalize to the right to development and propose suitable policies compatible with the legislation of each State;

- It is important to adopt institutional frameworks and legislative measures along the lines of those adopted by several Arab States to constitutionalize rights or agree upon a national charter for sustainable development.

National voluntary reviews

- National voluntary reviews help promote national ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals, increase awareness of the principles they enshrine and determine national priorities and objectives;

- It is important to uphold a participatory approach to preparing national voluntary reviews in order to ensure credibility and comprehensiveness in accordance with the principles of the 2030 Agenda;

- It is important to adopt a rights-based approach to the follow-up and review process and consult periodic reports submitted by States to international human rights mechanisms and treaty bodies, especially the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in order to standardize follow-up and review mechanisms in line with comparable models.

c. Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity

- Adopt a broad conceptual approach to social and poverty eradication policies within the framework of comprehensive development plans;

- Take into account the links between poverty and inequality in addressing the causes of poverty and existing disparities, adopt a multi-dimensional concept of poverty, study poverty in its local manifestations and develop appropriate methodologies to measure it;

- Effect change in economic structures and social policies, incorporate environmental dimensions, reform labour market governance, fight corruption and reduce any clash among economic, social and environmental goals;

- Accord sufficient importance to employment and workforce protection policies, make a practical commitment to international conventions and acknowledge the role of the unions and collective dialogue in achieving decent employment;

- Reform monetary and fiscal policies to achieve redistribution and social justice, putting an end to discriminatory policies and establishing a rights-based approach to inequality;

- Seek to address cause and effect at the same time: ending occupation, war and conflict, which are the main causes of poverty and vulnerability, and adopting policies combining relief, humanitarian action and development, in addition to building capacities and flexibility;

- Incorporate all dimensions of development, without exception, in strategies to oppose occupation and conflict, including those related to production, labour

and natural resource management and protection, and provide services for all in order to foster resilience;

- Involve everyone in creating sustainable solutions, especially women, persons with disabilities, the poor, the weak and the most marginalized groups;
- Build effective and accountable institutions and inclusive, just and transparent systems of governance, these being the preconditions for resolving crises, averting war and establishing lasting peace;
- Broaden the national policy-making space and consolidate the right of States to formulate policies which serve their interests and maintain their sovereignty over their own resources;
- Consolidate the integrated management of strategic planning and implementation in the development sector as a fundamental pillar of the work of government institutions.

d. Regional priorities

Gender equality and empowerment of women

- Review constitutional and legal frameworks to uphold women's rights and empowerment and formulate practical mechanisms to apply these rights;
- Formulate integrated and inclusive gender equality policies as part of the sustainable development agenda at national and regional levels;
- Take action at regional level to reduce gaps within and between States regarding women's economic and political participation and put an end to violence and harmful practices against women;
- Put in place an effective system of monitoring and follow-up on the basis of a list of gender equality and empowerment indicators, taking national issues and regional trends into account.

The environment and sustainability

- Incorporate the environmental dimension in all areas of development and build effective partnerships to preserve the planet and its natural resources, according particular attention to the havoc wreaked on the environment, natural resources and cultural heritage by war and conflict: in such conditions, the environment is a silent victim;
- Incorporate the concepts and principles of sustainable development at all educational levels to help build an environmentally responsible generation that will practise environmentally sustainable behaviour;
- Place the environment at the heart of economic and social development, as sovereignty over the management of natural resources and the protection and proper, sustainable use thereof is key to combating poverty, achieving prosperity and promoting peace and stability.

Population

- Incorporate issues of international migration in development policy at national and regional levels as drivers of economic and social development;
- Focus on internal migration and the development of appropriate urban policies to address the effects of increasing urbanization in Arab countries;

- Make investments designed to benefit from the demographic dividend of growing numbers of young people by investing in their health, welfare and education, developing their skills, empowering them economically by giving them employment and encouraging them to be entrepreneurs and stakeholders, in accordance with the frame of reference of the Cairo Declaration of the Conference on Population and Development (2013) and the 2030 Agenda;
- Give effect to the proposals of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), concerning the New Urban Agenda of the United Nations designed to make cities safe, inclusive and healthy, ensuring that they use resources in a sound and sustainable manner and are managed in accordance with participatory governance systems.

Food security

- Reduce reliance on food imports by investing in the development of technology to ensure sustainability of food production and reduce pressure on natural resources;
- Grant priority to developing agriculture to help boost the economy, promote food security and reduce poverty, particularly by creating jobs in sectors that will safeguard the environment and natural resources;
- Curb food waste in order to reduce the food security gap.

Health

- Adopt an integrated approach to development based on close collaboration between the ministry of health and other ministries and stakeholders to address major challenges and meet the health needs of all;
- Formulate an inclusive health policy that takes into account the needs of marginalized groups and the weakest in society, including persons with disabilities, the elderly and carriers of the HIV/AIDS virus;
- Introduce the dimension of gender equality in Sustainable Development Goal 3, on health, to address the major regional challenges of child marriage, female genital mutilation and violence against women.

Disability

- Grant special attention to the rights of persons with disabilities by adopting a holistic approach and including disability issues in national development plans and programmes;
- Adopt social protection policies and systems designed to reduce inequality and discrimination and ensure that the disabled have access to resources, jobs and public services; this will include development of technologies to promote self-reliance at all levels;
- Form a specialized, regional working group to monitor the extent to which disability issues are incorporated within policies and mechanisms relating to the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Invite regional actors in the field of sustainable development, including ESCWA, to organize regional follow-up and review workshops to promote the role of civil society in monitoring progress, particularly as regards access by persons with disabilities to places, services and information, in accordance with the principle of equality for all.

The family

- Focus attention on the family as a basic component of Arab society and guardian of social cohesion, formulating integrated development plans that take into account the needs of all family members and the changes occurring in the family and society, as well as closure of the knowledge gap;

Human rights

- Respect the right to development and commit to international human rights standards as a precondition for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and development, with no-one left behind;
- Adopt a rights-based approach to social policy, particularly in relation to fighting poverty, achieving social justice and eliminating discrimination against any population group on whatever grounds;
- Foster regional efforts to put in place inclusive social protection systems on the basis of the minimum level of social protection, curb discriminatory practices against women and girls, the disabled, young people, adolescents and groups discriminated against on grounds of race, nationality, religion, creed etc. and respect the right to development, the right to self-determination and the right to sovereignty over resources.

e. Means of implementation at regional level

- Mobilize means of implementation at regional level, including financial resources, human and technological capacities, commercial resources, data and statistical systems and partnerships with civil society, the private sector, universities and research centres;
- Create a regional mechanism to build agreement on means of funding at regional level and give effect to commitments and pledges;
- Foster proposals for funding development at regional level using sustainable mechanisms designed to promote the concept of joint responsibility, reduce the funding deficit and limit dependence on conditional aid;
- Foster regional dialogue on implementing the Addis Ababa Agenda on financing for development and strengthen international cooperation and partnerships on the basis of national and regional priorities;
- Cooperate in the field of information technology in order to reduce costs and increase efficiency, make databases available to researchers and create regional structures and mechanisms to support scientific research in the service of the Sustainable Development Goals, empowerment and localization of technology;
- Cooperate in the field of commerce, taking into account the particular features of individual States and the production sectors of each in order to mitigate the severity of competition and promote integration;
- Develop statistical systems and the legislation pertaining thereto, identify regional goal and target-related indicators and build a database to monitor these;
- Develop programmes to boost capacities and close the knowledge gap;
- Ensure the right of access to information for all to enable people to contribute to the drafting of development policies and programmes, while seeking to observe a rights perspective in all data classification;

- Cooperate and enter into partnership with civil society, including trade unions, on a non-discretionary or formal basis as a precondition for achieving the 2030 Agenda, ensuring that all stakeholders have the right to express a view, participate in and influence the course of events; promote the Decade of Arab Civil Society Organizations in this context;
- Foster the role of the private sector as an essential partner in development, stressing its commitment to social and environmental responsibility and to human rights.

f. Promoting the regional drive for the 2018 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development

Translate pledges into practical steps in the form of regional activities to be implemented before the next Forum, as follows:

- Organize a meeting of experts, bringing together all stakeholders to agree upon a shortlist of goals, targets and indicators that will constitute a regional framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda (based on previously agreed regional issues and the Doha Declaration);
- Explore regional follow-up and review mechanisms, including the design and content of the Arab Sustainable Development Report;
- Widen the base of consultation and dialogue with non-governmental partners, particularly civil society organizations and the private sector;
- Organize a regional meeting of parliamentarians to promote the role of national parliaments in implementing, monitoring and following up the 2030 Agenda;
- Promote knowledge production and capacity-building by developing Arabic language training materials on adapting the 2030 Agenda to national and regional characteristics;
- Create a team of experts and trainers specializing in the goals of the 2030 Agenda;
- Promote partnerships and organize joint activities with regional actors in the development field, including the United Nations and LAS;
- Prepare a report on progress achieved in implementing this programme, for presentation to the 2018 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development.

II. Conduct of sessions and content of presentations

7. In addition to the opening and closing sessions, the Forum included eight plenary sessions, focusing on the key theme of "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Arab region" and national experience of implementing the 2030 Agenda and means of implementation at regional level, as well as five special sessions on Arab region priorities, such as gender equality, the environment, population, food security, health and poverty and their incorporation in the development plan. The plenary sessions dealt with the following topics:

- Session 1: Preparatory presentation on the second year of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region;
- Session 2: Implementation of the 2030 Agenda: the Arab perspective;
- Session 3: National voluntary reviews;

- Session 4: Poverty and prosperity: the question of distribution;
- Session 5: Poverty and prosperity: inclusive growth and decent work;
- Session 6: Building prosperous societies through peace and stability;
- Session 7: Achieving prosperity by mobilizing the means of implementation at regional level;
- Session 8: Dialogue on the key messages to emerge from the 2017 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and future steps.

a. Opening session

8. The opening session was addressed by HE Dr. Saadeddine Othmani, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco; Dr. Khawla Mattar, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCWA; and Ms. Nada el-Agizy, Director, Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, League of Arab States (on behalf of the Secretary-General). Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, took part by video recording.

9. Dr. Saadeddine Othmani focused on sustainable development as a noble goal, designed to achieve a decent life for all, alleviate human suffering and safeguard the rights of future generations. The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, he was, was an occasion for collective reflection, and was informed by the unique characteristics of the Arab region, which currently faced a grave situation. He further stressed that tensions in the Arab countries required collective action to save what could be saved and achieve a reasonable degree of progress in the Sustainable Development Goal indicators in order to enable the region to play an effective role at the global level. Dr. Othmani called for solidarity, cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and expertise in order to benefit from fruitful experiences. He commended the Moroccan model, which held the human being to be the key to development and invention and a fundamental agent of integrated, balanced and sustainable economic growth. Concluding his address, Dr. Othmani reaffirmed that Morocco was determined to join regional efforts to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

10. Ms. Amina Mohammed highlighted the importance of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development as a valuable opportunity for collective reflection on how to confront the challenges to development in the Arab region on the basis of the 2030 Agenda. She stressed that issues of social, economic and environmental inequality, youth unemployment and discrimination against women, no less than conflict, extremism and violence, diminished a country's capacity for progress, undermined past achievements and weakened current efforts to supply water, conserve nature, address the impact of climate change, develop infrastructure and promote regional trade and sustainable economic growth.

11. Ms. Nada el-Agizy spoke about the difficulties facing development in the Arab region and underscored the importance of security and stability in creating an environment that would help address poverty — the subject of the 2016 Arab Forum — in all its aspects. She commended United Nations and League of Arab States efforts to strengthen the capacities of Member States and build institutions. The 2030 Agenda should be incorporated in national and regional strategies on the basis of consultation and national dialogue. Ms. el-Agizy further stressed the importance of the recommendations of the Preparatory Meeting regarding environmental issues, regional priorities and the need to incorporate the environmental dimension in development efforts as a fundamental element of economic and social stability. It was also important to exchange information and benefit from the experience of other regions, especially in developing the green

economy, green investments and sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

12. After thanking Morocco and the Forum's partners, Dr. Khawla Mattar said that regional forums were determined to use the 2030 Agenda to lead the Arab region toward a better future, as expressed by the Arab States in the Doha Declaration (2016) and at the 2016 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development. She commended the Moroccan development model and the experience of Arab States in complying with the 2030 Agenda in a meaningful way. She also outlined the institutions and policies that would support the realization of the ambitious global goals set forth in the Agenda. It was essential to involve all stakeholders and boost cooperation, integration and solidarity at the regional level in order to provide a decent life for the Arab people. Development was the right and responsibility of everyone, particularly in the light of the current crises, wars and the Israeli occupation of Palestine. There was a need to step up efforts and promote coordination between actors to make available the necessary resources and capacities to serve the countries and peoples of the region.

b. Plenary sessions

Session 1: Preparatory presentation on the second year of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region

13. The session was opened by Mr. Ziad Obeidat, Director of Development Plans and Programmes at the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, who stressed the importance of convening the Forum on a regular basis and continuing to work within the framework of the 2030 Agenda. The Arab region must have an effective presence at international level. He commended the participatory character of the Forum, particularly the involvement of representatives of young people, women, the private sector and civil society alongside those of governments. The 2030 Agenda was being implemented amidst a multitude of challenges including occupation, war and conflict. There could be no development without peace and no peace without development and good governance.

14. Ms. Karima al-Korri, officer in charge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Unit, ESCWA, reviewed the role and goals of the Forum's 2017 programme of action. Due attention should be granted to regional action in achieving the 2030 Agenda, given the close link between regional issues and the challenges of national development. It was essential to explore regional solutions and policies that would assist national processes, and to determine and achieve regional goals directly in partnership with stakeholders. The challenges of poverty, inequality, unemployment and natural resource scarcity required special attention, particularly given that war, conflict, insecurity and instability were common regional issues that had an enormous impact on the countries of the region. The forum should address the following important topics, which were directly relevant to the region:

- What regional framework or mechanism would be needed in order to make the transition from commitment to action and effective implementation?
- What sort of joint action was required to transform the structure of inequality, address unjust power relations and bring about long-term change?
- Was it possible to formulate a short-term action plan that would translate good intentions into the allocation of appropriate resources?
- What were the requirements for adopting a regional approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals? What regional follow-up and review mechanisms might be adopted?

Session 2: Implementation of the 2030 Agenda: the Arab perspective

15. The session was chaired by Ms. Limia Abdulghaffar, Secretary-General of the Sudanese National Population Council, and the following took part in the proceedings: Mr. Daoud al-Deek, Assistant Deputy Minister for Social Development, member of the Sustainable Development Steering Committee and member of the National Committee for Sustainable Development (Palestine); Ambassador Tariq al-Ansari, Director, International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Qatar); Mr. Sami Bougacha, Director, Department of Multilateral Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Tunisia); Ms. Haifa Muqrin, Head of the Sustainable Development Goals Sector, Ministry of Economy and Planning (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia); and Mr. Mohammed Mihdad, Director of Governance, Ministry Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of General Affairs and Governance of the Kingdom of Morocco.

16. National presentations, while addressing common issues, differed in accordance with the challenges faced by each State. With regard to adapting the global agenda to national conditions, speakers were in favour of incorporating or localizing global goals, objectives and indicators into current and new national plans and sectoral strategies, as opposed to addressing them separately. Statistical frameworks compatible with national goals should be developed. Speakers emphasized that the principles of national ownership, the provision of technical support and partnership were fundamental to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

17. Participants stressed the importance of adopting a clear system to manage the development process. Several measures adopted by a number of Arab States to institutionalize the sustainable development process were reviewed. These included the adoption of national charters, laws and regulatory legislative frameworks (as in Morocco), constitutionalizing the right to development (as in Tunisia) and translation of the political commitment to the 2030 Agenda into leadership structures at the highest levels (office of the prime minister or president), involving all relevant ministries and sectors to drive the process of sustainable development.

18. The discussion focused on ways of achieving sustainability in all sectors, the importance of formulating a unified conceptual framework for sustainable development at regional level and the need to find sources of funding, including Arab ones, without conditionalities. Participants addressed the efforts of Arab States to activate the funding process in line with Sustainable Development Goal 17, concerning revitalization of the global partnership for sustainable development and, in particular, target 6 regarding enhancing North-South and South-South regional and international cooperation. Civil society representatives noted that most of the national strategies and experience reviewed did not refer to persons with disabilities; that category had been neglected at the planning and organization stages.

Session 3: National voluntary reviews

19. The session was chaired by Mr. Aziz Ajbilo, Secretary-General of the Ministry Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of General Affairs and Governance of the Kingdom of Morocco. It was addressed by Ambassador Ashraf Ibrahim, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs (Egypt); Engineer Ziad Obeidat, Director of Development Plans and Programmes, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Jordan); Ms. Noura al-Muraikhi, Director, Department of Planning and Quality, Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics (Qatar); and Mr. Ilcheong Yi, Senior Research Coordinator, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

20. The Egyptian experience focused on the factors involved in preparing a voluntary report at the beginning of 2016, when the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals came into effect. This report laid the foundation for national ownership of the process of defining priorities, formulating indicators and developing a suitable institutional framework to ensure comprehensive, coordinated and participatory review. The creation of a ministerial committee to monitor implementation, chaired by the Prime Minister and with the Minister of Investment and International Cooperation as rapporteur, had helped the process to succeed. Furthermore, the support of the United Nations (the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ESCWA and United Nations country team) had had a positive effect on the quality of the report and its compliance with the proposed template. Under the stipulated participatory approach, meetings with civil society had been arranged to discuss the report before the final version was adopted. The time factor had been a challenge, as had been the measurement and analysis of certain goals at the initial phase of implementation due to incomplete national data.

21. Within the framework of the Qatar National Vision 2030, the Qatari presentation focused on the adaptation of national strategies to Sustainable Development Goals and formulation of institutional structures and follow-up mechanisms to support implementation. Following adoption of the Doha Declaration on a Data Revolution in the Arab World (October 2016) and, subsequently, the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (13 to 15 December 2016), Qatar had proceeded to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals in its 2017-2022 national development plan and institutional strategy plans. Qatar had launched an initiative to develop an interactive database on the 2030 Agenda indicators, in addition to an "agenda for change" project that would act as the basis for the follow-up and review for the drafting of the country's national voluntary review on official statistics. Under the supervision of the high-level working group established to monitor implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Qatar would shortly publish its first periodic statistical report on sustainable development indicators.

22. The Jordanian presentation focused on "Jordan Vision 2025" and the lessons to be learned from the process of adapting the 2030 Agenda to national requirements under the institutional arrangements that Jordan had established in 2001. The Higher National Committee on Sustainable Development had established the principles of coordination, integration and cooperation among institutions. Following publication of the 2030 Agenda, the Committee had been restructured to include a number of ministries and non-governmental organizations. In addition to the gender group and human rights and freedoms group, 17 national groups had been formed to work on harmonizing the national plan with the global Agenda. Jordan had also developed more than 600 measurement indicators and was currently working on its first national voluntary review, which would be based on national development priorities, including education, youth employment, decent employment, energy, food security, health and the empowerment of women. The review would address means of implementation (Goal 17), including capacity-building, transfer of knowledge and expertise and development funding in the light of the existing social conditions in Jordan.

23. Presentations on the experience of preparing national voluntary reviews noted the importance of avoiding a piecemeal approach to the 17 Goals and 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda. In order to achieve social, economic and environmental sustainability at the same time, those topics should be tackled holistically. It was not enough to take on the easy goals; those issues that would bring about the desired social transformation must also be addressed. It was essential to interact with and ensure the effective participation of stakeholders at all stages when preparing

national voluntary reviews. That approach would make it possible to understand the relationship among goals, targets and real priorities, and map out the future to which all peoples aspired.

24. Subsequent discussions focused on the challenges faced in preparing national voluntary reviews and lessons to be learned. Participants highlighted the importance of accountability and the diligence required to determine baselines and national indicators. Adapting the 2030 Agenda to national and local circumstances was not an easy matter; it requires concerted effort on the part of stakeholders and strong institutions to drive and coordinate the process at all levels.

25. Participants concluded by stressing that States should endeavour to adapt the 2030 Agenda at the national and local levels. All stakeholders should be involved, including young people, civil society organizations, the private sector, science and technology centres, research institutes and universities. Institutional structures should be put in place to steer the process and ensure proper coordination and integration of roles and responsibilities. Statistical systems capable of providing credible data by which to measure progress should be put in place.

Session 4: Poverty and prosperity: the question of distribution (under the auspices of ESCWA and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development)

26. Mr. Paul Ladd, Director, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, delivering a presentation on the subject of poverty and prosperity, said that social policy should not be confined to limited interventions to combat poverty; instead, there should be a general policy covering everyone. It was important to adopt a broad definition of poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that must be studied and understood in its specific geographical context. The link between poverty and inequality, which was itself multidimensional, should also be examined. As its title suggested, the 2030 Agenda was a transformational one. In order to achieve sustainable development, the required transformation and change must include economic and social structures, social relations and patterns of employment.

27. The session was addressed by Mr. Ilcheong Yi, Senior Research Coordinator, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development; Mr. Said al-Saqri, President, Omani Economic Association; Mr. Mohammed Bilqasimi, poverty and development expert (Morocco); and Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director, Arab NGO Network for Development. The session was chaired by Mr. Oussama Safa, Head of Participation and Social Justice Section, ESCWA.

28. The presentations and discussions dealt with different dimensions of the issue of redistribution and social policies designed to eradicate poverty. Speakers underscored the need for genuine commitment to development as a holistic concept embracing a wide-range of social policies covering everyone, including policies to combat poverty. Social protection should be rights-based, and the tax system should act as a key tool for fair redistribution of income and burdens. Institutions, social dialogue and the principle of freedom all had a part to play in the successful implementation of social policies. Partnerships with the private sector and civil society were essential in order to mobilize resources. Development should leave no one behind, particularly persons with disabilities, who were one of the weakest and most marginalized groups in society. Speakers drew attention to the relationship between corruption and poverty and to the importance of national sovereignty over and proper use of natural resources as one of the requirements for eradicating poverty and spreading prosperity.

Session 5. Pillars and principles: inclusive growth and decent work under the auspices of the International Labour Organization and ESCWA

29. The session was addressed by Mr. Niranjan Sarangi, First Economic Affairs Officer, Economic Development Section, ESCWA; Shaza Ghaleb al-Jondi, United Nations Coherence and Resource Mobilization Officer, Regional Office for the Arab States, International Labour Organization; Mr. Houcine Abassi, former Secretary-General of the Tunisian General Labour Union; Dr. Abbas Korima, Secretary-General, National Council for Strategic Planning, Ministry of Presidential Affairs (Sudan). The session was chaired by Mr. Magued Osman, Director, Egyptian Centre for Public Opinion Research ("Baseera") and former Minister of Communications and Information Technology (Egypt).

30. The presentations and discussions dwelt on the need to change the approach to development in the Arab region in order to give priority to inclusive economic growth that will generate decent job opportunities for all. The economic growth experienced by several Arab countries had been absorbed by population growth and had not been translated into development. The jobs that had been created did not meet the requirements of decent employment, which was a precondition for transforming growth into a development dividend. Productivity remained low, unemployment was high, and the informal sector continued to absorb the largest share of the workforce. Women's participation in the workforce was the lowest in the world and represented a common challenge for all the countries of the region.

31. Speakers drew attention to major problems in the governance of the labour market. Privatization took place in an environment dominated by corruption, which weakened the contribution of the private sector to development. The Arab States did not pay enough attention to employment and workforce protection policies. International conventions were most often not enforced, even once they had been ratified. In many Arab countries, trade unions were not recognized in practice. Given the lack of freedom of assembly and freedom to negotiate and engage in genuine collective dialogue, the preconditions for decent employment simply did not exist. Furthermore, several factors, such as corruption and debt, caused resources to be misallocated or misused.

32. Participants stressed the need to transition from thinking nationally to thinking regionally and from short-term focus on particular sectors to strategic thinking. There was a need to remove the contradiction between economic goals and social goals and between State economic policies and their impact on people's lives. Social dialogue and the formation of economic and social councils or equivalent bodies with expanded roles was an essential first step to achieving sustainable development and providing decent jobs. One participant emphasized the importance of a rights-based approach, especially as States had committed to economic and social rights under international conventions. Such action could represent an effective framework for directing, evaluating and monitoring compliance with policies, including decent employment conditions.

Session 6. Building prosperous societies through peace and stability under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and ESCWA

33. The session was addressed by HE Mr. Mohammed al-Maitami, Minister of Industry and Trade (Yemen); Mr. Samir Abdullah, Senior Researcher, Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) and former Minister of Planning and Minister of Labour in the Palestinian Government; Dr. Khawla Mattar, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCWA; Ms. Razan Zaayter, Chair, Arab Network for Food Solidarity and founder, Arab Group for the Protection of Nature. The session was

chaired by Ms. Itidal al-Mujhari, Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (Cawtar) (Tunisia).

34. The presentations and discussions dealt with the instability of the Arab region and its effect on development, poverty eradication and the realization of prosperity, particularly in Syria, Palestine and Yemen. Speakers stressed the need to distinguish among the occupation in Palestine, war and conflict in other countries and cases of limited conflict and instability. There were numerous foreign and local actors, and the outbreak of war or conflict was not a choice. Occupation, wars and crises exacerbated poverty and undermined prospects for prosperity, while peace, security and stability were preconditions for sustainable development. However, that does not mean that development actors should hold off until the situation changed. Efforts to achieve development, even under difficult conditions, could be turned into means of curbing violence, securing the foundations of sustainable peace and addressing certain root economic and social causes that could give rise to violence and extremism.

35. Participants stressed the importance of institutions: institutional weakness and the dominance of closed and exclusionary systems were causes of crisis. Conversely, building inclusive, transparent and fair systems of governance and effective institutions helped resolve crises and bring about sustainable peace. It was important to listen to people and learn from their astonishing resilience in the midst of the difficult conditions in the region — particularly the women who had preserved what remained of the social fabric. Direct intervention plans should be formulated, combining relief and development interventions with a belief in the people's ability to build the future. Civil society had a role to play in supporting the peace process and reconstruction.

36. Palestine's long experience under occupation showed that fragmenting action plans and reducing them to the political sphere did not produce the desired results. In order to foster resilience, strategies to confront occupation and conflict must incorporate all aspects of development without exception, including improving production, job opportunities and service provision for all. Speakers highlighted the importance of human rights, the right to development and international law in providing a theoretical and practical framework to resolve crises, ensure sovereignty over national natural resources and build sustainable peace.

Session 7: Achieving prosperity by mobilizing the means of implementation at regional level

37. The session was chaired by Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director, Arab NGO Network for Development and addressed by Ms. Zohra Ettaik, Director, National Agency for Renewable Energies and Energy Efficiency, Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and the Environment (Morocco); Mr. Mustafa Khawaja, Director, Department of Registers and Statistical Monitoring, Central Bureau of Statistics (Palestine); Ms. Fatna Lakrani, Head, Department of Relations with the Arab World, Africa, Asia and Oceania, Customs and Indirect Taxation Administration (Morocco).

38. The session focused on ways to achieve sustainable development and prosperity through regional action to mobilize the means of implementation, including financial resources, human and technological capacities, commercial resources, data and statistical systems and partnerships with civil society, the private sector, universities and research centres. It was difficult to effect change unless measures were taken to increase cooperation, make optimal use of the region's capacities and resources, and ensure that the statistics essential for sound development planning were available.

39. The Moroccan experience of formulating and implementing renewable and clean energy strategies highlighted the importance of developing such technology and ensuring its transfer across the Arab region, as was the case in Africa, producing sustainable and clean energy, protecting natural resources and reducing energy costs and, hence, the price of services. Participants stressed the role of the education system, particularly higher education and scientific research, in supporting the development of knowledge appropriate to contemporary needs.

40. Reliable regional data were a vital basis for sound policies; yet lack of figures, contradictory figures and difficulty in accessing statistical data were common regional challenges. Indicators commensurate with the region's priorities should be formulated. One presentation addressed the Palestinian experience and national efforts to build a statistical system that could combine all relevant sources, ensure consistency of approaches and methodologies for quantification and classification, and mobilize key partnerships with civil society was noted.

41. Speakers called for effective Arab participation in the high-level group established to determine and monitor global indicators and link them to the goals of the 2030 Agenda. One recommendation was that an agreement should be reached on the creation of an Arab information bank dedicated to the 241 indicators of the 2030 Agenda. Such a regional mechanism would monitor progress, analyse regional trends, identify weak points and correct trajectories.

42. Speakers addressed the role of business in promoting Arab integration. Commercial relations between regional States might more readily be described as competitive than holistic. The focus on competing production sectors diminished States' capacity to cooperate, stimulate trade, open up their economies to the outside world, create business opportunities outside the Arab region and leverage migration to achieve development. Another recommendation stressed the need to boost knowledge-based efforts and field studies to permit development of legal frameworks and industrial and commercial policies to promote integration, with due regard for Arab countries' resources and production and consumption capacities.

Session 8: Moving forward: dialogue on the key messages to emerge from the 2017 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and future steps

43. The session began with a discussion of the aforementioned recommendations and approaches. Participants highlighted the relevance of the Arab regional level in the 2030 Agenda. A holistic regional approach to the 2030 Agenda should be adopted, based on the numerous processes that were currently in place at the national and regional levels.

44. Participants called for Arab regional goals, targets and a concise list of associated indicators to be derived from regional priorities and the recommendations on regional integration. A programme of activities should be formulated to complement and dovetail with the other processes. Several activities should be implemented in the period before the next Arab Forum in 2018, and a report on progress made (the package of proposed activities appears in section I(f), above, on key messages to the high-level political forum on sustainable development) should be submitted.

c. Special sessions

45. Five special sessions were held during the forum, dealing in depth with certain goals and development dimensions, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/299 concerning follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, which identified a number of goals for review in 2017. In addition to Goals 1 and 17, which were discussed in the plenary

sessions of the Arab Forum, three special sessions dealt with Goals 2, 3 and 5 and two sessions dealt with topics covering a number of sectors of maximum importance for implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the need to incorporate the environmental dimension and take population issues into account in development strategies and plans. The following is a summary of the most important points raised in the special sessions:

1. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda from a gender perspective: the gender dimensions of poverty and prosperity (under the auspices of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the League of Arab States and ESCWA)

46. The session was addressed by Her Excellency Ms. Bassima Hakkaoui, Minister of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development (Morocco); Ms. Niama Jenina, expert in gender equality issues; Dr. Salma Nims, Secretary-General, National Committee for Women's Affairs (Jordan); and Ms. Mehrinaz el-Awady, Director, ESCWA Centre for Women. Her Excellency Ms. Bassima Hakkaoui delivered an address on behalf of the Arab Women Organization. The session was chaired by Mr. Mohammad Naciri, Regional Director for Arab States, UN-Women.

47. The session addressed gender equality issues in the context of eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity. Experiences from Jordan and Morocco were presented, alongside the regional visions of the League of Arab States and ESCWA. The discussion reviewed the success of several Arab countries, particularly Tunisia and Morocco, in making progress toward gender equality, in addition to the increased level of participation of women in other Arab countries. A review of all the indicators showed that the gender gap persisted in many areas, and significant discrepancies exist between countries. Several common problems still existed and needed attention, particularly the low level of participation of women in the workforce and in politics, the persistence of violence and harmful practices against women, and the lack of an adequate legislative framework to promote progress toward gender equality consistent with aspirations. Education and health indicators had improved, but gaps continued to exist.

48. Gender equality and women's empowerment should be taken into account. Women and girls should be protected, particularly in situations of conflict, asylum and displacement. Women bore additional responsibilities where protection and empowerment were lacking. Due attention should be given to Sustainable Development Goal 5, and national plans should be formulated on the basis. Because women's empowerment was a standard for progress in overall sustainable development, the gender equality perspective should be mainstreamed into all strategies and aspects of development.

49. Contributors drew attention to the important role of regional organizations, such as ESCWA, UN-Women and the League of Arab States, in organizing action at regional level, especially the formulation of a regional vision based on analytical review of national strategies. The latter had failed to adequately tackle women's inability to access and control resources or the topic of unpaid labour. The process of national and regional adaptation must include a clear definition of priorities, including ridding legal frameworks of discriminatory provisions, formulating an effective monitoring and follow-up system based on appropriate indicators and harmonizing national and regional actions with those taken at the international level.

2. Food security in the Arab region: opportunities and challenges (under the auspices of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations)

50. The session was addressed by Ms. Amira Qarnas, Chair, United Nations Committee on World Food Security; His Excellency Mohammed Bin Abdullah al-Rumaihi, Minister of Municipality and Environment (Qatar); Mr. Mohamed Ait Kadi, President, General Council of Agricultural Development (Morocco); and Mr. Mohammed al-Jamaani, Secretary-General, Ministry of Agriculture (Jordan). The session was chaired by Ms. Roula Majdalani, Director, Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA and Mr. Abdessalam Ould Ahmed, Regional Representative, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations.

51. Contributors drew attention to the importance of food security, which overlapped with a number of challenges facing the region, such as development, poverty eradication and the promotion of prosperity, particularly in the light of the changes in the Arab world. The strenuous efforts that had been made on all fronts have been inadequate to meet the challenges of war, which has paralysed farming and the capacity for food production. That was the case not only in those Arab countries suffering from starvation, such as Yemen and Somalia, but also such countries as the Sudan and Iraq, which had previously been known as the breadbasket of the Arab world. The agricultural sector has an important role to play in creating jobs, and its contribution to the gross domestic product must be boosted. Natural resources, particularly water, also played a significant part in promoting security and stability. Sustainable agriculture and sustainable patterns of production and consumption should be promoted.

52. The Arab world had the potential and capacity to guarantee food security; but proper exploitation depended on policy, strategy and planning. Speakers called for implementation of the plan drawn up by League of Arab States. Food waste was another concern. Some 30 per cent of the food produced was not consumed, and that enormous amount would be enough to feed 80 million hungry people. Technology, scientific research, good governance and regional and international cooperation all had a decisive role to play in addressing problems of food security in the Arab region and must be mobilized alongside the means of implementation when formulating regional strategies. It was essential to adopt an approach linking water, energy and food security at regional level.

3. The holistic approach and environmental dimension in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme, ESCWA, League of Arab States and United Nations Human Settlements Programme)

53. The session was addressed by Ms. Shahira Wahbi, Environment Department, League of Arab States; Mr. Zaghloul Samhan (Palestine), representative of the Joint Committee on the Environment and Development in the Arab World; Ms. Katja Schäfer, United Nations Human Settlements Programme; Mr. Moulay Hafiz Kabiri, High Commission for Water and Forests and the Fight against Desertification; Mr. Slimane Maliki, Secretariat of State for Sustainable Development (Morocco); and Ms. Mounya Braham, sustainable development expert (Tunisia). The session was chaired by Ms. Roula Majdalani, Director, Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA and statements were summarized by Ms. Melanie Hutchinson, Regional Coordinator, United Nations Environment Programme.

54. Speakers stressed the importance of incorporating the environmental dimension in sustainable development plans and strategies at local, national and regional levels. There was no shortage of regional strategies and plans, but implementation was poor. Participants wondered whether, following adoption of the

2030 Agenda, the mainstreaming of the environmental dimension had moved forward or back. Participants agreed that the environmental dimension was the weakest aspect of sustainable development in the Arab region, as noted in the outcome document of the Preparatory Meeting for the 2017 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (Cairo, 23 and 24 April 2017), which highlighted recommendations for the sustainable development of natural resources.

55. The discussion addressed the subject of urban settlements and their role in promoting growth and prosperity. It was pointed out that cities consumed a large amount of energy and produced a high level of emissions, which were a major cause of environmental pollution. It was therefore essential to understand the challenges posed by urban settlements and move toward sound and sustainable urban policies in the region.

56. Legislation should be adopted to mainstream the environmental dimension in development plans in order to ensure that all stakeholders (governments, investors, ministries and so on) were committed to the principles of sustainable development, and that economic activity did not exhaust natural resources. One presentation examined the successful experience of Tunisia and Morocco in that regard. Discussion examined the serious environmental challenges posed by war and conflict and the huge costs of occupation, not to mention the historic neglect of the environmental dimension. In order to mainstream environmental dimension, it would be useful to legislate and institutionalize the process; put in place effective mechanisms to make implementation and accountability mandatory; enhance relations with the private sector to enforce environmental responsibility; and establish clear timetables for implementing the process in conjunction with capacity-building and optimal use of technology and data.

4. Demographic dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (under the auspices of the United Nations Population Fund)

57. The following participated in the session: Mr. Magued Osman, Director, Egyptian Centre for Public Opinion Research ("Baseera") and former Minister of Communications and Information Technology (Egypt); Mr. Ali al-Mutlaq, Higher Population Council (Jordan); Mr. Daoud al-Deek, Assistant Deputy Minister for Social Development (Palestine); and Mr. Marwan Bilarabi, youth affairs expert. The session was chaired by Ms. Hala Youssef, Advisor, Arab States Regional Office, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

58. Contributions stressed that approaching the Sustainable Development Goals from a population perspective would help to ensure commitment to the principle of "leaving no one behind". Because economic migration was one of the drivers of economic and social development, the issue should be incorporated in development policy at the national, regional and international levels. It was important to work within the framework of the 2030 Agenda to coordinate national plans in source and destination countries and formulate programmes incorporating migration issues in Arab States' development process. Given the high rate of urbanization in the Arab countries, internal migration should also be included.

59. However, the demographic dividend is not automatically guaranteed. In order to benefit from it, countries must make targeted investments and formulate appropriate policies and interventions at national and regional levels. Policies must cover the following elements: health and welfare; education and skills development; economic empowerment, employment and entrepreneurship; and youth, governance and rights. Particular importance must also be granted to demographic changes, population projections, changes in the age structure of the population, population displacement and migration. Given that young people made up more than 30 per

cent of the population of the Arab countries, addressing the dividend by investing in youth would have an impact on all population groups.

60. Speakers called on governments, United Nations organizations and regional committees to continue joint action to implement the roadmap on harnessing the demographic dividend in the Arab States within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, upgrade the statistical effort and adopt an appropriate list of indicators to improve the monitoring and follow-up of population issues in particular and development in general.

5. Poverty and health: achieving Goal 3 in the Arab Region (under the auspices of the World Health Organization)

61. The following participated in the session: Ms. Rayana Bou Hakka, Director, Country and Partnership Support Unit, Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, World Health Organization (WHO); Mr. Abdulsalam Boutayyeb, health and poverty expert (Morocco); Ms. Sakina Bouraoui, Director, Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research ("Cawthar"); Mr. Abdullah Sayyid Ahmed, Dean, Faculty of Public Health (Sudan); and Ms. Sylvana Lakkis, Chair, Arab Regional Office, Disabled Peoples' International. The session was chaired by Mr. Yves Souteyrand, Resident Representative (Morocco), WHO.

62. The session dealt with general issues of health, development and poverty. Presentations examined the experience of Jordan, Sudan and Morocco. Specific issues, such as disability and women's health were also addressed. Speakers stressed that improving health required a holistic approach. The public needed to be convinced that health was not the exclusive purview of the Ministry of Health, but required the cooperation of other ministries. Parliamentarians should be involved in the formulation of health policy, as proper and effective planning is vital to achieve balanced and equitable health outcomes.

63. Speakers drew attention to the need to recognize the significant discrepancies between countries and within the same country regarding access to health care services. Holistic health policies must take into account the needs of marginalized groups and the weakest elements in society, including persons with disabilities and those carrying the HIV/AIDS virus. By rectifying inequalities in health care provision, the Sustainable Development Goals provided a genuine opportunity to do more than merely improve national averages. Health policies should also guarantee the availability and proper distribution of qualified medical staff and seek to develop research and skills in priority areas, such as disability and the health priorities of various population groups.

64. The gender equality dimension set forth in Goal 3 on health should be mainstreamed in all Goals. In that context, three major challenges needed to be addressed, namely child marriage, female genital mutilation and violence against women. In order to ensure follow-up, progress made in those areas, particularly regarding violence against women, should be included in national voluntary reviews. Speakers called for cooperation among health actors to be boosted in order to develop agreed methodologies and databases that would help build knowledge usable by stakeholders to identify, study, monitor and address the social determinants of poverty.

d. Concluding session

65. The 2017 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development concluded with a press statement read by Ms. Karima al-Korri, stating that participants had agreed on a number of ideas and measures to energize the regional dimension of the 2030 Agenda by working to translate the region's priorities into measurable, regional

goals. Those ideas amounted to a regional executive programme for sustainable development up to 2030 to which all stakeholders were able to commit. Regional follow-up and review mechanisms would be a key element of that programme. The programme would begin to take shape in the following weeks and would be ready for presentation to the next Forum in 2018.

66. The concluding statement emphasized that participants supported the Palestinian people in its endeavour to end Israeli occupation, and supported the just humanitarian demands under international human rights law and international humanitarian law of Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike in Israeli jails.

67. At the end of the Forum, ESCWA, as the organizing body, stated that the participatory approach was essential to the success of the Forum. All participants were being involved preparing the final version of the messages to be submitted to the high-level political forum.

68. His Excellency Mr. Lahcen Daoudi, Minister of General Affairs and Governance of Morocco, delivering a concluding address, stated that regional efforts should be intensified in order to bolster development at a time when the Arab world was going through major changes and facing serious challenges. Morocco welcomed the opportunity to host the forthcoming Forum in 2018. Dr Khawla Mattar, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCWA, thanked Morocco and all participants for their valuable contributions to the success of the Forum. The latter would act as a platform to drive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region.

III. Participants

69. More than 150 high-level participants attended the Forum, including representatives of the organizing bodies, namely ESCWA, the League of Arab States, United Nations organizations working in the Arab region (members of the Regional Coordination Mechanism) and the Ministry Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of General Affairs and Governance of the Kingdom of Morocco, as well as representatives of governments, key groups, regional bodies concerned with sustainable development, Arab monetary funds and several Arab parliamentarians. Correspondents from a number of media organizations also attended.

70. The United Nations was represented by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Women, the Food and Agricultural Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the International Organization for Migration.

71. More than 70 delegates from 15 Arab States participated, 13 of whom are members of ESCWA, namely the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, the Republic of Tunisia, the Republic of the Sudan, the Republic of Iraq, the State of Palestine, the State of Qatar, Libya, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the Republic of Yemen, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

and Djibouti. Delegates from a number of specialized ministries attended, including general affairs and governance, planning, foreign affairs and international cooperation, social development and labour, solidarity, women and the family, rural development, administrative development, finance, trade, industry, energy and minerals, health, municipality and environment, water, agriculture, sustainable development, equipment and transport, and higher education, as well as from several central bureaux of statistics, national population councils and economic, social and environmental councils. Parliamentarians from Palestine, Egypt and Morocco attended.

72. Key groups and regional and international organizations represented included the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED), Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), Arab Network for Food Sovereignty, Arab Group for the Protection of Nature, Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Arab Women Organization, Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (Cawthar), Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization, Transparency International, Saudi Fund for Development, Islamic Development Bank, the Arab office of Disabled Peoples' International, Kabira Women's Group, Omani Economic Association, Tunisian General Labour Union, Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), Egyptian Centre for Public Opinion Research ("Baseera"), Collectif pour la Promotion des Droits des Personnes en Situation de Handicap, Arab Forum for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Moroccan Evaluation Association, Tarika Association for Sustainable Development, Network for Animal Welfare and Sustainable Development (RAPAD Morocco). Correspondents from the following media bodies were present: Observatoire sur le Moyen-Orient et l'Afrique du Nord, *Le Maghreb* newspaper, *Alghad* newspaper, Agence Maghreb Arabe Press and Food Magazine.